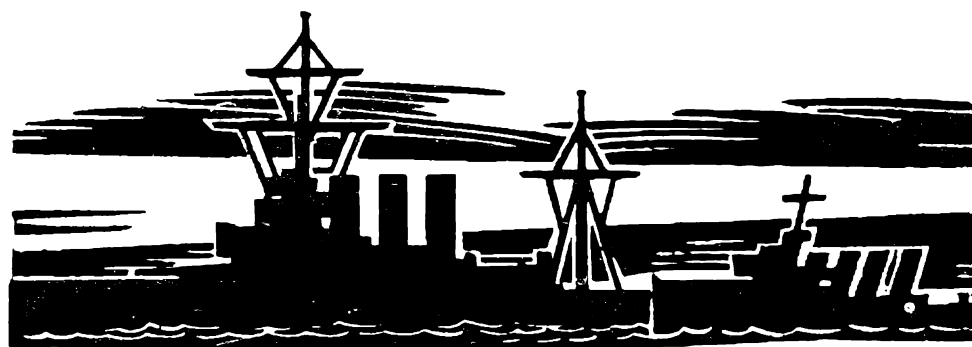


Leonid Sobolev

THE BIG REFIT









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A BOOK IN TWO PARTS

PROGRESS PUBLISHERS • Moscow

TRANSLATED FROM THE RUSSIAN
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КАПИТАЛЬНЫЙ РЕМОНТ

На английском языке

С $\frac{70302-178}{014(01)-78}$ 148-77

First printing 1965
Second printing 1978

CONTENTS

PART ONE.

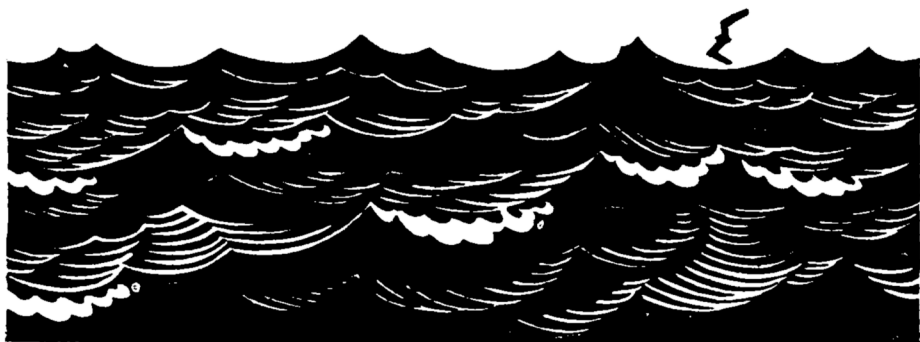
CHAPTER 1	9
CHAPTER 2	27
CHAPTER 3	40
CHAPTER 4	54
CHAPTER 5	74
CHAPTER 6	104

PART TWO.

CHAPTER 7	143
CHAPTER 8	165
CHAPTER 9	197
CHAPTER 10	217
CHAPTER 11	240
CHAPTER 12	268
CHAPTER 13	299
CHAPTER 14	327
CHAPTER 15	361

TO MY STEADFAST FRIEND—O.I.

PART



ONE

CHAPTER 1

The hammock swung and shook, the thudding rhythm of the engines deepened the morning sleep of youth. Then a bell began to ring, urgently, disturbingly. . . . Fire quarters—extinguisher in No. 15, starboard officers' passageway. Yuri Livitin started up, his hands automatically reaching out for the taut-drawn canvas edges of the hammock in order to jump down onto the deck and run to his station. His hands, however, found nothing to grip and slid along the fleecy surface of the blanket. The sun-flecked half-light of blue blinds invaded the compartment. The railway carriage swayed and rumbled, and there was no fire drill at all. He was on three-day shore leave. Three days of blessed "liberty"! No ship's alarms, no boatswain's pipe! Yuri smiled and yawned with pleasure.

It was remarkable how quickly ship routine became a mental habit! Hammock, fire quarters, extinguisher in No. 15—one would think he had had years of sailorising, tumbling up in quick response to the fire bell. Yet it was hardly three weeks since the Naval College had started its summer cruise. It was a good thing, though. A midshipman should always have the feeling of treading the deck, the quiet life of a landlubber should be alien to him.

"Hullo there, my budding Nakhimov,* isn't it time you got up?" a genial voice came from below. "You'll miss Helsingfors. They've brought the tea round already."

Yuri looked down. A stout infantry officer was sitting on the lower berth, from which the bedclothes had been removed, and was drinking tea, his spoon tinkling against the glass. Heavy-handed army wit—"budding Nakhimov". You're not much of a Kutuzov yourself. Footslogger.

"Thank you, sir, I'll be down in a moment."

Midshipmen are always polite, cold but polite, like Englishmen. A man had to be given to understand what an immeasurable gulf there was between a wretched army officer and a midshipman of the Naval College—that *corps d'élite*, the only institution of its kind in the whole of Russia, to which only the sons of officers, hereditary nobles and civil servants not below the fourth class in the table of ranks were admitted. This wasn't your provincial infantry school where they just took any old body who came along.

The Junior Captain was a tactless, meddlesome fellow, tediously garrulous. They had only met the day before, at mid-night, but Yuri already knew that the Captain was returning from leave to Nikolaistadt, that the garrison there was a small one and the service dull, that the Chukhni** there, taken all round, were a lot of dirty pigs, the girls ugly and tiresomely virtuous, and that he himself had twice been passed over for promotion. A typically provincial army man.

Yuri jumped down nimbly, his white trousers half drawn on, and finished dressing below with due apologies. The Captain, closely and rather tactlessly, watched him as he adjusted his jumper round his thighs and buttoned up the flap of his trousers with an air of studied negligence.

"I don't think much of those trousers, coming admiral. Fancy having to fiddle about with all those buttons at the call of nature!"

"Regulation rig. Besides, an ordinary fly on these trousers would be ugly."

The tone was of the kind one uses when speaking to a servant or attendant in the theatre—cold, impersonal, polite. But the Captain did not notice it. He was drinking his tea, his rumpled army jacket gathered over his stomach in habitual folds. He passed a bawdy remark about the flap being handy in certain emergencies, and laughed heartily at his own joke, Yuri Livitin arranged a smile after

* Nakhimov, R. S.—famous Russian admiral (1802-1855).—*Tr.*

** A Russian nickname for Finns.—*Tr.*

the manner of the *Aurora's* Commander—with the mouth alone, corners turned down, and eyes cold and disdainful. Commander Engelhardt of the *Aurora* was Yuri's notion of what a model naval officer should be—always cold, remote, disdainful, and immaculately dressed and shaved. Yuri had nothing to shave yet, and his half-pouting lips refused to go down. Nor could he manage the look disdainful—his eyes, scandalously boyish, were always full of fun. The nearest thing he could achieve was a steely voice and practised restraint of gesture. Yuri was eighteen, and he was brimming over with youth and the sheer zest of living. Back at the College, among his mates, Yuri would let himself go like the skylarking boy he was, but out of College the naval uniform imposed restraint and dignity of behaviour.

He washed over the built-in wash-hand stand and cleaned his teeth, regretting that he could not part his hair the way Engelhardt did—his round head was close cropped. What a stupid custom it was, to clip the hair of the midshipmen during a cruise, like the sailors'! But this, like many other inconveniences, was acclaimed a virtue hallowed by tradition. Since it was impossible to have an immaculate parting at sea, during a rough voyage, it was better to have none at all—said the midshipmen of the Naval College, parrying the taunts of the girls.

The conductor, answering the bell, removed the bedclothes and brought hot strong tea and biscuits. Yuri moved away from the Captain and began to trim his nails with a small pocket file.

The Captain started off again on one of those tiresome train conversations.

"How much longer have you got to grind at that school of yours, cadet?"

Cadet! Livitin threw him an annihilating glance. "Cadet Livitin"—it sounded like nothing on earth! "Midshipman Livitin"—now that was more like it. Here was a combination of words that tickled his vanity, all the more as it was a novelty, the order promoting the cadet of Company 4 to midshipman of Company 3 having only yesterday been read out from the quarterdeck of the *Aurora*. Hence the shore leave, the self-assured gestures, and that brand-new little gold anchor on the white narrow shoulder straps. Cadet indeed!

"I beg your pardon, Captain, but I am not a cadet. I'm a midshipman of the Naval College."

"It's the same thing."

"No, it isn't. We have no cadets."

"Tell me another one," the Captain said in a piqued tone. "Don't I know there are! I have an enlistee in my company by the name of Gerlach who was a former naval cadet."

Yuri's glance was one of lofty toleration.

"A midshipman of the Naval College may be demoted to naval cadet for poor progress or misbehaviour—that's true, Captain. A naval cadet is simply an enlistee of the fleet, nothing more."

"Have it your way. And how long do you have to be a midshipman?"

"A midshipman," Yuri said, correcting the officer's misplaced accent on the naval term, "graduates from the Naval College in three years. In 1917 I shall have the honour of becoming an officer of His Majesty's Navy."

There was no such thing in Russia as His Majesty's Navy. It was called the Russian Imperial Navy. But this did not sound half as good as the English "His Majesty's Navy", "His Majesty's ship", and the English were worthy of imitation in all things, from dreadnoughts down to pipe-smoking and sangfroid. The English were the finest maritime nation going.

"And can a naval cadet be promoted to sub-lieutenant?" the Captain asked, misplacing the accent a second time, and a second time Yuri corrected him.

"Yes, he can be promoted to sub-lieutenant," Yuri said. The Captain's way of accenting certain words differed from that used in the Navy.

These were trifles, to be sure, but they merely stressed the fact that the Captain would never understand the splendid precision of sea service. The Captain put his glass down with a gesture of irritation.

"If he can be promoted then there's no difference!"

"Except one. An officer promoted from naval cadet will hardly ever get the admiral's eagles."

"Why is that?"

Livitin shrugged. He was obviously, though correctly, making fun of the Captain, whose temper was rising.

"Lowly birth?"

"Er . . . no, lack of proper knowledge. The Naval College is considered an institution of higher learning."

Yuri was lying, but lying in good faith. It was wishful thinking on his part, as it was on the part of all the boys who had ever attended the Naval College, the only one of its kind in the whole of Russia. He was also lying about the cadets and the admiral's

eagles. Admiral Makarov had never passed through the Naval College, and had qualified for sub-lieutenant after having graduated only from a nautical school, yet he had constructed the world's first powerful icebreaker, *Yermak*, and was the first man in Russia to write a course of naval tactics. But one did not necessarily have to mention this. Yuri wanted to show the Captain, who had merely passed through some provincial infantry school, what a world of difference there was between a midshipman and a cadet. The Captain lit up a cheap cigarette. Livitin got out his pipe.

"Do you mind if I smoke, sir?"

The fragrant smoke spread in blue wreaths and quivered in the air with each motion of the carriage. The Captain closed up and sat smouldering. Cheeky young devil, smoking English tobacco, too. Got up to the nines, self-assured—his kind had the road all clear before them. It had been cleared by their fathers and grandfathers. The young cub was probably on speaking terms with the whole fleet by now—he wouldn't find it hard to run in harness. The Captain had no love for officers of the Guards or the Navy. They were all brilliant, arrogant, aloof. His Majesty's Guards, His Majesty's Navy! And wasn't the army His Majesty's? The army, that multitudinous grey mass of subalterns, of numbered regiments, which bore the brunt of wars and insurrections—wasn't that army His Majesty's too? Where did these naval men get all that self-assurance, the aplomb with which they walked the streets of the Finnish towns, as if they were footpaths on their own estates? They were the real masters of the country, order in which was kept by subalterns like himself in the garrisons of Abo, Tornio, Nikolaistadt, and Sveaborg. He was a bit afraid of these naval sub-lieutenants, though they were of inferior rank. But how could a man assert his authority when his jacket hung in folds over his belly, and his voice, in anger, grew shrill or exploded into heavy-handed profanities? That golden armour of superiority and self-assurance was not purchasable. It was the fruit of years of education and inherited possessions.

The Captain glanced at the midshipman with hatred and curiosity.

The latter sat in an attitude of lounging but becoming ease, the way people sit in a drawing-room. He took long deep draws on his pipe so that his lower jaw sank and the skin on his cheeks grew taut. Then, slowly and calmly, he took the pipe out of his mouth, and opened his fresh youthful lips, revealing a mouthful of curling white smoke. He inhaled it, thrusting forward his lower jaw, then threw his head back slightly and let out a long jet of smoke, which he directed sideways and upwards through his lower lip. The Captain

was unaware that smoking was an elegant art and that Livitin had cultivated the habit from Lieutenant Vilken, who, in turn, had imported it after a foreign cruise in the *Rossiya*, having acquired it directly from an English flag lieutenant. The Captain knew nothing of this, and so it was with an abrupt angry movement one would hardly have expected from so flabby a body that he flung his limp chewed-up cigarette-end into the spittoon under the table. The cigarette-end fell on the blue carpet beside the nickel-plated spittoon, and the Captain reddened deeply, flustered in the presence of this boy, who was below him in rank. The midshipman did not notice the cigarette-end, he was not even looking there, but the Captain felt that this was merely condescension, a show of good breeding.

The train slowed down. The midshipman got up, tapped the ash out of his pipe over the spittoon with a bent finger, and put it into his pocket, still burning. That, too, was a form of naval swagger—putting a pipe in your pocket while still alight. Life is made up of little nothings, and none of them are to be missed. Always, every second, even when alone, you have to have the feeling of being under observation if you wish to be impeccably restrained and to create an impression. Such is the school of life, such is the iron law of good breeding. Livitin put on his cap and felt it with the edge of his hand to make sure that the cockade was in the middle of his forehead.

“Good-bye, sir,” he said, touching his cap.

The Captain looked at him with envy and sadness mixed with resentment. All the white on him—the jumper, the duck trousers, the shoes and cap-cover—was dazzling; all the gold—the letters on the cap ribbon, the stripes, and the anchor emblems on the shoulder straps—was sparkling; the bars of the shirt, the collar and cuffs were dark blue. The bloom of youth was tempered by a smooth tan and the finely chiselled nose with the deeply curved nostrils reminded the Captain of the old portraits of the generals at the Nobles’ Club in Nikolaistadt—the same stamp of pedigree, the blood of generations. The young man stood over the Captain like a white frigate under tall sails over a moss-grown mouldering rock—the Russian navy of the future triumphing over the Russian army, an army of garrisons manning derelict forts, an army of nameless numbered regiments billeted in Russia’s backwoods. The only way the Captain could touch the midshipman on a tender string was to say off-handedly, without changing his pose or offering his hand, “Good-bye, Cadet.” Instead, he stood up, held out his hand and said with some embarrassment, “Good-bye, glad to have met you.”

You couldn't help losing your heart to this young man, whose road lay open before him to the end of his life, a young man born to the glitter of a lieutenant's epaulets, to the heavy flight of an admiral's eagles.

The midshipman stepped out onto the platform of the railway station, and the Captain watched him threading his way easily and confidently through the crowd. His elbows were pressed to his body, and the wrists, held slightly away, marked every step with a smooth circular movement around the body. He looked as if he had just washed his hands and was holding them in front of him, afraid to soil them upon himself. This peculiar gait was Yuri's own invention, and there would come a day when somebody would adopt those fluid elegant gestures as Yuri had adopted the art of pipe-smoking.

Helsingfors was sunny, clean and spruce, as always. It seems as if the sun never leaves this city; in winter it glitters intensely on snowdrifts swept up against the curbs, on the hoar-frosted trees, and the smooth ice of the frozen harbour. In summer it floods the streets of Finnish bluestone and builds nests of light among the dense foliage of the boulevards and gardens. On that May day Helsingfors stood on her granite quaysides, neat and tidy, like a fair-haired lusty fröken in a starched pinafore at her tiled kitchen range—a neat, leisurely, comfortable city. The green tramcars roll along like toys. The windows of every little shop make solid displays in miniature, but on the Esplanade where frontages run the full length of the wall and the shops carry stocks of duty-free goods, this solidity verges on the luxurious. The noiseless motorcars match the taciturnity of their drivers. The black-coated policemen at the cross-roads are polite, taciturn and dapper. The Swedish and Finnish inscriptions on the signboards and tramcars, the Swedish and Finnish speech, the leisurely pavement crowds, the blond hair and curls, the rosy cheeks of the young men and girls, the markka and penni coinage, give one the sense of being in a foreign city. Even the clocks differed by twenty minutes from St. Petersburg time—they had their own, un-Russian, time here.

Within a twelve hours' journey from the capital of the Russian Empire, on a promontory of blue granite, stands a foreign city and the time in it is not Russian time. Russian time—cheerless, tsarist time—drags its dreary length over the vast empire like a drunken man lurching and floundering in the unconquerable mire of a village street. It trundles along towards the future—slow-gaited, lazy, uncertain, driven on by the St. Petersburg tri-coloured stick of

Russian time—and it seems to be always scratching the back of its head, wondering dully: “Where the devil are they driving me?”

But nobody knows where it is being driven—this thousand-year-old bearded Russian time, whipped on by the autocracy. Out of the dim-distant ages it came blundering, cracking the skulls of Tatars and Poles with battle-axes, trampling the neighbouring khanates and kingdoms beneath the slow tread of Potyomkin’s armies, beneath the light hooves of the imperial cavalry, and strewn Europe with the parti-coloured uniforms of Alexander’s Guards, Asia with the white shirts of Skobelev’s detachments, the East with the black *papakhas* of Kuropatkin’s armies. Acquiring, conquering, subduing, weighed down by the burden of its own loot, Russian time stumbles on from war to war, and wars stick out like mileposts marking the painful progress of Rus, of Russia, of the Russian Empire. The whole vast land, the world’s greatest in size, reeked with the blood and conflagrations of wars and insurrections. The measured tread of the Russian army was just as heavy wading through pools of Russian blood as it was through pools of foreign blood. Triangular bayonets were plunged with equal force into Turkish, French and muzhik guts. The drums beat the same tattoo before the prancing legs of the emperor’s horse on the square and before the twitching legs of the hanged rebels.

Russia’s cities were indifferently proud of their years, and the lustre of some years was dimmed by the foreshadow of others. Kiev plumed itself on the year 988, when naked Rus dipped into the holy waters of the Dnieper dragging their Peruns and Dazhbogs* in with them. Matter-of-factly, like a merchant’s wife with her expensive ring, Moscow prided itself on the year 1812, while in that ring glowed the sinister reflection of gun volleys and fires in the crooked streets of Presnya. Sevastopol jealously guarded the smoke-pennoned glory of the eleven months of 1855—and the smoke of Nakhimov’s bastions mingled with that of the burning cruiser *Ochakov*. The year 1552 planted the grim tsarist eagle upon the battlements of Queen Sumbeka’s tower and Kazan ceased to be a khanate. At the foot of this tower the year 1774 saw silks, the wares and dead bodies of merchants, the velvet coats, medals and powdered heads of nobles thrown out of the shops and palaces and trampled in the mud by the crowds of Pugachov. The Caucasus raised to its snowy shining heights scores of years of a dark and cruel history recording the conquest of its mountain villages. The Irtysh tossed in its yellow

* Pagan Slav gods.—*Tr.*

stream the year 1582, when the words "Siberian kingdom" lay their brooding and heavy shadow upon tundra, taiga and brimming river throughout the land. Grimly Helsingfors preserved the memory of the year 1809, when Finland was finally reunited "to the family of Russia's nations".

And silent were the cities, all the cities of the Russian Empire, as they gazed through the smoke-blurred, blood-dripping figures 1904-1905 into the dim and inscrutable distance of the years to come, as they joined the silent march of slow Russian time in a lazy, aimless, jostling crowd, not knowing whither they were being driven by the stamped paper of ministerial St. Petersburg.

They went in a submissive crowd—cities, principalities, duchies and kingdoms, all wearing different faces, speaking different languages, conquered at different times: Moscow, Kiev, Vladimir, Novgorod, the kingdoms of Kazan, Astrakhan, and Poland, the Siberian kingdom, the Pskov state, the kingdom of Chersonesus Taurica, the kingdom of Georgia, the Grand Principalities and Duchies of Smolensk, Lithuania, Volhynia, Podolia, the lowland Grand Principality of Novgorod, the Grand Duchy of Finland, the Duchies of Estland, Courland, Liflandia and Semigalia, the Principalities of Samogitia, Vyatka and Yugor, the Iberian, Kabarda, Karthli lands, and Armenia, the state of Turkestan—all the possessions listed in the title of Emperor and Autocrat of all the Russias, the Tsar of Poland, the Grand Duke of Finland, etc., etc., etc. And among them goes Finland, sombre as her brooding forests, hard as the granite of her cliffs, incomprehensible as her tongue, and hostile as a colony. Among this throng of Russian principalities and Asiatic kingdoms she walks hating and silent, with the firm tread of gloomy, unhurried Finnish time. Unlike all the others, the Grand Duchy of Finland "forms an inseparable part of the Russian Empire whose internal affairs are administered by special regulations on the basis of special legislation".

And the ordinary Russian subject who comes to Finland does not feel at home there. He always has the feeling of being a visitor. He tries to walk the street without jostling anybody, he acquires, most unexpectedly, a civil tone, and does not use the familiar "thou" even when addressing a cabman. He hastily drops his five-penni fare into the box hanging at the entrance to the tramcar for fear of the conductor's mute contemptuous reminder, effected by rattling the box in front of the forgetful passenger. The cleanliness of the public lavatories astounds him, and he passes through their frosted glass doors as if he were entering a chapel—silently and reverently. He

delicately leaves a manners bit on the table of the railway station buffet, where one can eat one's head off at the cost of a single markka. The ordinary Russian subject walks the streets of Helsingfors, sunning himself in the beams of foreign culture, solemn as at a funeral, and happy as a birthday-party culprit.

But your true Russian can never keep sober for long at his own birthday. He gets himself quietly drunk in a restaurant, and becomes flushed with patriotic pride. Whose country did you say it was? The Finns'? Nonsense! It was a province of good old Mother Russia! Who's the boss here? The Russian subject starts remembering the articles of Menshikov in *Novoye Vremya*, which prove beyond a shadow of doubt that Russia will meet her doom at the hands of the Finns, the Poles and the Jews. And so he bangs his fist down on the table. Swedes and Finns look round distastefully. Then black-clad policemen appear and silently shepherd him out into a waiting car and do not even handle him roughly. At the police station the fine he has to pay is announced promptly and precisely; it is heavy enough to dampen gay spirits and pot-valour. From that day your Russian subject begins to return the Finns their own hatred, he no longer waxes sentimental over things foreign, and loses all relish for gas stoves, cheap hired cars, and automatic switches on staircases, which keep the light on for as long as it takes a sober man to get to the top floor. He lives in Helsingfors cowed, bored, with all the verve gone from him. A dull country, Finland!

But at Helsingfors there is the Russian fleet, at Sveaborg a fort, at Skatoudden the dockyards, and at Mariinsky Palace the Governor-General. That is why the families of naval officers, harbour officials, garrison families, doctors, officials of the Governor-General, tradesmen, financiers, and teachers of the Russian gymnasium live in Helsingfors. In the layer-cake of Russo-Swedish-Finnish society there is a sprinkling of naval officers—they are the shining bits of candied fruit on its top, best layer. They are its adornment, its lustre and its flavour, and the money of the Swedish and Russian financiers, the administrative grandeur of the Governor-General's court pales before them.

They are the masters—no one can deny them that. Helsingfors is the capital of the fleet.

The Russian population of the Finnish city are unlike the casual visitor. They are accustomed to the peculiarities of Helsingfors, half of them speak Swedish, and they take everything as a matter of course—the gas stoves, the central heating, the slot-machine buffets, Finnish honesty and the public lavatories, clean as chapels. They

bring up elegant fiancées for the Swedish businessmen and the naval officers, hesitating in their choice between the number of shares and the number of stars on the shoulder straps, since both equally tend to increase, and, consequently, lead to greater prosperity. They equip their drawing-rooms with light Finnish furniture, eat sour milk with cinnamon and without sugar before their soup, hang great cosy lampshades over oval tables covered with starched tablecloths, and maintain an un-Russian cleanliness in their homes with the help of Swedish and Finnish housemaids. In the evenings these homes are invaded by naval officers—tall, well-built, short, or fat, but all equally charming, elegant and witty; they ask permission of the hostess to discard their harness and toss their dirks onto the little table standing in front of the mirror in the hall. The dirks lie in a heap on the polished wood, and the mirror reflects the ivory and gold of their hilts and the rippling moire of their black swordbelts.

When a merry crowd gathers, the flats quickly empty, the whole party tumble into cars and go on the spree at one of the fashionable restaurants. The restaurants are gay with music, lights; there is a spirit of exhilaration in the supper, the light wine, the sparkling wit, the exciting proximity of women, attractive, witty, not mercenary. Flirtations are instantaneous, love affairs tinder-quick, for the gleam of the sea lies on the smooth cloth of frock coats and dazzling collar wings—the sea will not wait, it hurries you to snatch at life, at joy and love. What if that sea is close at hand, what if it has no outlet into the ocean, what if the Russian fleet has long forgotten its three-year round-the-world cruises and the ships are riding at anchor in the roadsteads as they have been doing all the summer and will continue to do in the spring—the sea beckons all the same, the sea will not wait, the wine excites romantic dreams, and women fall in love with the sailors and sailors with the women as if the squadron were weighing anchor the next morning, heading for the ocean highways. The fiancées leave earlier, and in the small hours of morning the restaurants eject the revellers, who come away in pairs, two by two—black overcoat and silk mantle, boat cloak and glossy fur coat, black overcoat and sky-blue hat, lieutenants with wives of the Governor-General's officials, commanders' wives with sub-lieutenants, commanders with brilliant widows. Tooting motorcars swish over the snow. Latchkeys to bachelors' rooms with private entrances tremble in hot fingers, and automatic switches put out the light on the landings during a preliminary kiss at the front door. Bachelor apartments with boxes of sweets and biscuits in the drawers of unused writing-tables, with an electric coffee-strainer and

Benedictine in the wardrobe, with fresh cool linen on the bed, and far out in the roadstead the icebound ship, tomorrow demanding service, but today bestowing "liberty" and bliss.

If you have no bachelor's apartment you tell the driver: "the Great Circle", and the car takes its passengers on a leisurely drive round the city. But the passengers have no eyes for the moonscape, and the driver never looks back through the little window behind him. The saloon is small and snug, like a ship's cabin, the roadway smooth and clean, like a ship's deck, and the car bowls along it with the swimming ease of a naval lieutenant's life. The "Great Circle" is a fixed route, and the man at the steering wheel takes the corners with a sure hand; life's route too is charted out for the sub-lieutenant, and the service turns the steering wheel at the turnings of the years with calm confidence. At one of the turnings a shifting moonbeam falls upon the shoulder strap of the coat, and over its two stars there gleams a third—a diamond teardrop in a pink feminine ear; within eighteen months, on Easter Day, the steering wheel of the service will be turned again, and a third star will make the sub-lieutenant a lieutenant, and life will roll along another street, one just as smooth and clean. The road is a beaten track, every turning of it known beforehand, and every street with its beginning and its end. The smiling lips of lieutenant and sub-lieutenant crush the woman's mouth with one and the same practised movement. The woman's shoulders droop weakly and her eyes grow misty under their fluttering eyelashes, denoting that she has no more strength to resist. Thereupon the lieutenant assumes a ravenous expression of overmastering passion, and (drawing the curtain behind the driver) throws open the fur coat with a bold gesture. Waves of perfumed warmth well up from its depths, and deft hands find their unerring way amid the folds of the dress—everything has its route, its familiar beaten track—life, service, and love.

But from outside a stench seeps into the car. It poisons the air, kills the warm fragrance; and the driver, stepping sharply on the accelerator, overtakes the dark-red tanks of the sanitary brigade lorries—Helsingfors also uses the cloak of night and the suburban road for sewage disposal. The lieutenant and the lady, with no change of passionate facial expression, pretend not to notice the noisome odour, which is as thick as honey. It is bad form to notice certain things. You may handle the most secret parts of a baroness's body, but may not name them, although the same words are uttered aloud in front of hundreds of sailors. The wife of a naval captain will let you do things to her no prostitute would stand

for, but she will never forgive a lover for leaving her to go to the lavatory without pretending he was going to speak on the telephone. Society's laws are immutable and you dare not turn off the beaten track.

The dark-red tanks, poisoning the moonlit night with their stench, trundle alongside the motorcar, churning their contents of juicy steaks, tender pink lobsters, strawberries, chocolate, caviare and expensive wines, as all these varied things were called when they recently adorned the restaurant table, but which are now indistinguishably mixed up in a malodorous oozy pulp. A gnarled old Finn sits on the tank cart stolidly breathing in the familiar stench and slowly munching a piece of bread he has brought from home. The shifting moonbeam falls upon his knees, lighting up three shining stars on the label of an empty brandy bottle rescued from a cesspool. The bottle, if washed, will fetch fifteen penni—one seventh of his night's pay. The old man looks round incuriously at the overtaking car. There is only one road, and the same potholes shake the rich contents of his tank and those of the noiseless motorcars.

Helsingfors wore its washed air of clean, festive brightness. Yuri walked down the short streets with his peculiar gait, cool and restrained, every now and then examining his reflection in the plate-glass windows of the shops. The city was dedicated to the Navy, and its best street, the Esplanade, abutted on the South Harbour, where destroyers lay in the very heart of the city. Here picket boats from the battleships and cruisers lying in the roadstead come alongside the granite quays. The latter were clear and deserted, save for the motionless figures of the duty on the jetty. Yuri scrutinised the men's cap-ribbons, and finding one with crowded gold lettering on it reading: *Generalissimo Count Suworov of Rymnik*, he went up to its owner.

"Will the boat be in soon, old chap?"

The sailor saluted somewhat uncertainly. The devil knows whether he was supposed to or not! There were no midshipmen in the Navy, they sailed in training ships, and the man couldn't for the life of him remember whether a midshipman was his superior or not. Everybody bossed the sailor, so he had better play safe.

"She's due in ten minutes, sir."

Yuri returned the salute and said with careless affability: "Stand easy, old chap!"

He felt an urge to talk to the man. It came from a general happy frame of mind and the novelty of hearing himself addressed as "sir", the sound of which was caressing to the ear.

"What company are you in?"

"Company Four, sir!"

"Four? So you're under Lieutenant Livitin? What's he like? Is he a good man?"

"Yes, sir, can't complain."

"Strict?"

"Service is service, sir."

"Do the men like him?"

"Yes, sir, they do."

"I see. . . . And what gubernia do you come from?"

"Vologda Gubernia, Kadnikov Uyezd, Soltsevo Volost, Village of Mali Soltsi, sir."

"So you're a Vologda man? What do they write you from home? How's the harvest this year?"

The sailor reddened from the strain of the conversation. Whoever heard of a harvest in May!

"The harvest's not bad, sir."

A cab drove up to the landing and a white-jacketed lieutenant jumped out of it. He had a dark natty moustache, and this gave his thin face a subtle air of foppishness and meticulous neatness. He touched his cap with a careless gesture, returning the salute of Livitin, who stood smartly at attention beside the sailor. He glanced at the quayman with narrowed eyes and said: "Has the boat been in yet?"

"Not yet, sir."

The lieutenant walked up and down, whistling, kicked a pebble into the water with the narrow toe of his English shoe, and then went up to Livitin.

"Are you coming to us, midshipman?"

"Yes, sir. I'm Lieutenant Livitin's brother."

"Glad to meet you. Greve, Vladimir Karlovich. . . . Livi often reads your letters to us—they're witty. Do you smoke? Have one of mine."

Greve dropped into conversation with Livitin about the Naval College, and the instructors, remembering all their nicknames, and charmed Yuri by his unfeigned interest in his progress marks, his pranks and his plans for the future. But as soon as three other officers appeared at the landing he left Yuri with the same ease of manner as he had fallen into conversation with him. Livitin, with studied unconcern, listened to his gay chatter, which was interspersed with mysterious hints, naval slang, and nicknames.

Aboard the picket-boat they forgot to invite Yuri into the stern cabin. He stood beside the coxswain, as if that, of all places, was

where he preferred to be. He felt somewhat deflated, though, and Lieutenant Greve did not seem half as charming as he had seemed at the landing stage.

Her low broad hull all aquiver, the boat, with chugging engine, rounded the island and made for the roadstead. The sea lay spread out under the morning sun, a cool smooth sheet, colourless here around the boat, but deepening to azure near the horizon. The *Generalissimo Count Suvorov of Rymnik* lay heavily in the water, her massive armour-plated hull seeming to merge with the grey-blue water. She lay there huge, silent and motionless. Her deck, broad and spacious, was like a church-porch. Four gun-turrets lined the deck from stem to stern, their long barrels sighted as if in search of the enemy. The turrets looked dwarfed and their armour weightless amid that vast expanse of deck. But the armour was heavy; it encased the turrets and superstructures in a thick twelve-inch crust, sheathed the length and breadth of the ship with heavy plates and girded the hull with a belt of steel. The armour was so heavy that the great ship sank deep into the water with all her crushing weight, two-thirds of her hull submerged with only her low sides and deck rising above the surface, like a swimmer resting on the water, who leaves only his mouth clear for breathing. The battleship sat so low that a landsman would never guess how great she was, how many decks, hatches and deep shafts lay concealed in her bowels.

Between the turrets thick funnels thrust up from the deck in two tall straight columns. The masts, encumbered at the base by deck-houses and bridges, spiralled upwards through this massive web of metal, tapering into the sky with the thin needles of their flagstuffs. If you threw your head back and looked up at the flagstaff you would think the clouds were sailing alongside and that a perpetual calm reigned there in the cool limpid heights.

There is no more fitting place for a ship's flag in battle. Here it is whipped in the breeze by the ship's swift progress; here its blue saltire flutters over the squadron, menacing and defiant; here no quivering jets of hot flame belching from the long barrels of the guns can sear it, and no yellow smoke of a gun salvo can blot out its pride and glory. And when the water, rushing into the shot hole, floods every shaft, every hatch, every human throat; when, swallowing smoke and flame, it pours, hissing, into the funnels—even then the flag, defending the honour and valour of the Russian Imperial Navy, will be the last to go down. It was this picture that appealed to Livitin—the flagstaff sinking into the sea, carrying the fluttering flag of St. Andrew with it.

But ships did not die like that. They heeled over ponderously and irresistibly, after keeping the men in agonising suspense with the vain hope that the list was not a dangerous one—and the flag, describing a great swift arc together with the mast, took the final plunge into a sea warmed by the heat of the boilers and human blood. The flag sank first, before the ship's side, which stuck out hideously above the water, clustered with clinging and slithering bodies. That is what happened to eight warships at Tsushima. And it was from such proud tall masts that the flag was hauled down when Nebogatov's squadron surrendered to the Japanese.

And here, into this limpid calm, into this flight of clouds, there creeps, with slow dignity, the admiral's flag, when far out on the poop, the foot of the admiral steps masterfully upon the deck of the vessel he has chosen as his flagship. The admiral's flag does duty day and night, flying aloft over the fleet like one of the black eagles on the admiral's shoulder straps—rapacious, vigilant, cruel. From its eerie it sees everything, just as the admiral sees everything from the silk-and-leather luxury of his cabin. Here, into this limpid calm, flow the sounds of bugles and bands from all the passing ships as they sail past with their crews manning the sides. Here, into this proud solitude, come the reverberating claps of salutes fired in all the harbours where the ship appears, flying her rippling flag. Here, from this commanding height, the admiral's flag mutely confirms the admiral's will, announced by the colourful flutter of signal pennants.

And here, upon this blue cross, the conception of Man was crucified down the ages.

On this island of floating steel there are no human beings. Steel delights in figures. It was born from figures at iron works—the figures of temperature degree, atmospheres, ton weights. Through the figures of formulas and the figures of blueprints it had travelled the great machine road to reappear again in figures:

26,000 tons displacement;

42,000 h.p. in turbines;

592 feet in length;

40,000,000 rubles cost;

12 twelve-inch guns;

1,186,648 rivets;

1,186 lower ratings;

39 officers;

1 commanding officer

—just ordinary figures, without which steel cannot live, that is, move through the water and hurl steel cylinders from steel tubes

at another mass of steel that has 2,000,000 rivets and 1,306 lower ratings.

Thousands of instruments and devices are cunningly and economically stowed away within the heavy shell of armour, in the cramped spaces of turrets, casemates and compartments. Some of them are crude, simple and easily replaceable, as for instance the rammer of the 120-mm gun, which thrusts the charge home into the muzzle. It is a stick with a thickened end padded with leather. It fears neither rain nor frost nor draught; it is tough and strong, and if it breaks it can be instantly replaced. Others are fragile, delicate and costly—the chronometers, for instance. These are kept in the velvet repose of a spring case, housed in a special cabin at a level temperature away from the roar and shock of the guns, where the Navigating Officer, with light careful fingers, winds them up every day with a long gold-plated key and takes the maximum and minimum temperature readings. All the instruments on the ship, from rammer to chronometer, have their respective values and require definite care and attention.

The human instruments aboard the ship vary too. Some are crude, simple and strong, like the Seaman Second Class, No. 422 on the ship's books, whose business it is to hand up the shells. This instrument is a pair of hands—hard-gripping, tenacious, strong. It is inured to rain and draughts and salt junk. It is tough and hard-wearing, and in case of damage, easily replaceable. Others are delicate, fragile and costly—those are the officers. They are kept in leathered repose, in the upholstered armchairs of the wardroom, where the temperature is kept level and the air clean, untainted by the smell of sweat or coarse language. Every day they are taken ashore to mingle with their kind, every month they are wound up with the golden key of banknotes, and their taut springs of ambition are well oiled. It takes a year or eighteen months to make a sailor, but an officer, like a chronometer, is ground and polished and adjusted in the course of decades. From commanding officer to ordinary Seaman Second Class—all the human instruments servicing the ship have their own value and require definite care and attention.

There are no people on this island of floating steel. There are admirals, officers, warrant officers, petty officers and sailors. They are arranged on the rungs of the permanently established service ladder, some higher, some lower, and each on his own rung awaits his impact from above and passes it downwards—never the reverse. The order of things has been ordained through the centuries, and

the nervous twitch of the admiral's cheek on the top rung of the ladder is instantly translated on the lower rungs into the raucous obscenities of the petty officers, while the one short word "Bedlam!" falling from the admiral's tightened lips tête-à-tête with the commanding officer opens the floodgates of retribution over the lower rungs—eighteen months' cells distributed evenly among thirty-six sailors guilty of a "holiday" in scouring the crew's quarters. Every rung answers to its name—some of them just the title or name and patronymic, some the rank or surname, others only the surname, and on the lower rungs a nameless contempt.

"Hi, you, over there!" Lieutenant Greve shouted, looking out over the hood of the cabin.

The two boat-hook men, standing motionless on either side of the boat, looked round promptly and both answered together:

"Yessir?"

"I was speaking to you," the lieutenant nodded to the starboard man. "Report to your company officer that I found you in dirty work rig. Look at your filthy trousers!"

"Aye, aye, sir," the man said, turning away and standing rigid as before.

Yuri Livitin stole a glance at him. Broad, with a slightly turned up nose and a smooth tan that concealed the freckles, his face looked outwardly calm and unruffled. Damn it, what sort of men were they! No self-respect whatever. He didn't even look put out. Yuri himself had often been at the receiving end of sharp and humiliating rebukes, and with the memory of them came that quick hot wave of indignation and punctured vanity that brought the colour to his cheeks and hardened his eyes. It was a look that disconcerted even his company commander who would retreat in haste, repeating: "No free gangway!"—knowing perfectly well that the next moment discipline would get the better of Livitin. Yuri believed in discipline and liked it both in others and in himself, but whenever he got told off he would go up in the air. But this johnny didn't seem to care. Funny chaps. . . .

The boat swung round sharply towards the accommodation ladder, her wash rocking the long string of launches and pinnaces at the lower booms. The boatkeepers stood up and saluted. If the bowmen stand at attention without their boat hooks, that means there are officers aboard; they are not visible, but they are likely to catch the boatkeepers napping. But if the bowmen stand alert with the boat hooks in their hands, that means that the Captain or the Admiral is aboard the pinnacle, and you had to be alert.

Yuri Livitin drew himself up and glanced at the battleship—the first real man-of-war on which he was to spend his three days' leave, the first three days in the long train of years that held the fascinating promise of a wonderful career as a naval officer.

CHAPTER 2

There was a light tap at the door of the cabin.

"Come in, Kozlov," Lieutenant Livitin said, and said it unerringly. Kozlov had a peculiar knock of his own, discreet and gentle, like the touch of Fröken Anna's razor in Helsingfors's best barber's shop.

"Where shall I make the midshipman's bed, sir?" Kozlov said, appearing in the doorway. He was thickset, pink-faced, spruce and clean-shaven; his voice, too, did not jar. A good servant had to be unseen and unheard, and Lieutenant Livitin knew how to train his servants.

"Would you care to join me in the deck-cabin, Yuri? Or would you rather sleep here?"

"Whatever you say," Yuri answered in a breaking voice. "It is a bit stuffy in here."

It really was stuffy in the cabin. The lieutenant reclined on his bunk, his white jacket unbuttoned and his feet resting on a footstool, the armchair abandoned to the guest—the proverbial naval hospitality is extended even to a younger brother. The fan standing on a special little shelf rustled its golden wings, but the air was none the cooler for it. Everything in the cabin was spick and span—the white bowl of the washstand, the mirror with the fluffy bathrobe and Turkish towel hanging on either side, the shining varnish of the bulkheads, and the glass-framed phototypes screwed on to them with brass corner-pieces. Under the glasses were the *Generalissimo Count Suvorov of Rymnik* with Revel's church spires in the background, a three-masted barque riding the crest of a green hissing wave, and three girls—onc in lace-trimmed drawers, pulling on a stocking in the rosy glow of a fireplace, another in the beach-revealing beam of a warship's searchlight, standing ankle-deep in the water in a bent-kneed frightened attitude with one hand covering her small breasts, and the third in a flimsy nightie, awakening on a wide bed, eyes half-open, and fingers touching the milky-pink nipple of her full breast. The girls had long slender legs, wide blue eyes, fair hair and cherry-ripe mouths, in keeping with Anglo-French standards of art for the navies of the world.

Kozlov opened the wardrobe—there was no need to ask, when the desire had been half-expressed. The wardrobe smelt of scent and English tobacco. The stacks of linen were stiff and fresh. The collars, one inside the other, rose up in two white marble columns—the high ones to be worn with the regulation jacket on the right, and the wing-collars to be worn with the frock coat on the left. The suits hung in rows of smoothly ironed cloth with gleaming epaulets, shoulder straps and buttons—full-dress uniform, undress uniform, evening clothes, mess dress Class II, mess jackets, tunics, trousers. Below, shining ranks of shoes—“patents” on the right flank, kid leather on the left, and soft soled shoes for shipboard wear. The right-hand corner of the wardrobe was given over to the stern harness of office—gumboots for autumn watches, Russian welted top boots to be worn with full-dress uniform, Russian regulation high boots, swords for every occasion, dirks for full-dress and undress uniforms, binoculars in a yellow case, a black raincoat, shiny as a piano. No dust, no disorder anywhere. Able Seaman Kozlov attended only on Lieutenant Livitin, and the day had twenty-four hours. There were no wine or other stains on the clothes—a good servant must know all the remedies.

Midshipman Livitin, in the armchair, idly turned over the colourful pages of a French magazine. He was dressed as a sailor, like Kozlov—in jumper, cross-barred shirt and white trousers. Kozlov's trousers, however, were of sackcloth, limp as chiffon from frequent washing, and the collar and shirt were an anemic blue for the same reason. Livitin's white shoes were of suede leather, his socks of twisted silk, his trousers of fine-textured cloth with a knife-edge crease, the blue of his collar was deep and dark, like the sea before a gale, and on his shoulders were tabs of white cloth with gold stripes and anchors. A midshipman's jumper, after its fifth laundering, is transferred to his “number twos” and never leaves the Naval College. The bluejackets, on the other hand, only wore their “number ones” when piped to them.

Midshipman Livitin relaxed in his brother's cabin, revelling in the freedom and well-regulated life of a man-of-war—the best hotel in the world, he thought. The three-days' leave had wiped out the memory of the fretting anxieties of the training cruise, with its boatswain's whistle, its watches, boat pulling, scrub-rounds, damp morning call-hands, and the everlasting draughts in the midshipmen's deck. He looked at Kozlov's deft hands and suddenly became angry.

“Damn it all,” he said, flinging down the magazine. “I wish they'd hurry with the promotion. I'm fed up!”

"Silly ass!" the lieutenant said languidly. "Get yourself licked into shape, Simple Simon. He's a poor general who has not done his soldiering. Three more years in a sailor's hide will teach you what naval service is."

"You and your copybook maxims!" Yuri said irritably. "A sailor's hide! Why the devil do I have to lash hammocks, polish brasswork, scrub down decks and all but clean out the heads. I'll never have to do these things in life, I'm just wasting my best years on them. Playing at Nelsonism, a silly farce!"

"Now then, midshipman, hard astern," the lieutenant rapped out in English, adding with a smile: "*Devant les gens*, as Aunt Anne used to say."

Yuri coloured deeply and said, apropos of nothing:

"It's awfully hot, damn it! I'm used to the upper deck."

"Kozlov!" the lieutenant said, tossing a box of matches in the air. "When you've made the beds, rustle up some cold beer, will you. Not too much, though—they'll say I'm oiling the lower ranks."

"Aye, aye, sir. Not too much, sir," Kozlov answered, going out with an armful of bedding and shutting the door noiselessly behind him. Livitin junior braced himself for the coming lecture.

"Look here, Yuri," the lieutenant said gravely. "None of your democratic notions here. Don't you go and spoil Kozlov for me. He may be a clod, but he'll always find somebody to explain your words to him."

"You're right as usual, Lieutenant, but I stick to what I said," Yuri answered with studied flippancy, then suddenly exploded again. "Sailor's hide! Lick into shape! Drivel! I lash my hammock, and mess about with the swab, but have my meals served to me, and somebody else washes up for me. I'm dressed like a sailor, but I don't salute bearded petty officers, and I can go to a restaurant with you. I freeze like a son of a gun on boat-duty and blister my hands with ropes and oars, but in the evening, ashore, I sit in your fiancée's apartment and drink sherry, which, by the way, is pretty good stuff. A sort of idiotic duality! That most august midshipman, Grand Duke Nikita, also polishes brasswork and gets bawled out by his corporals.* And ashore these same corporals jump to attention in front of his automobile like Pavlons,** so that sparks fly from under their heels.

* The name given in Naval College usage to the senior company midshipmen appointed by the petty officers to the junior companies to assist the instructors.

** Cadets of the Pavlov School, noted for their military bearing.

Why, it's just a masquerade, a kid's game! Is that your way of getting us inside a sailor's skin? It's all tommyrot!"

"Look here, young fellow-me-lad, I'll put you under arrest," Livitin senior said, lighting a cigarette. Hot-headed boy, but a wise head it was he had on his shoulders. The Livitins' blood ran in his veins all right. Going about it the Stanyukovieh way, too, he was—fresh ideas in fusty routine, the problem of fathers and sons, so to speak. "I forgive you only because I thought as you do till I realised what a deep meaning there was in the swab."

"Meaning be damned! We're playing at sailors with our tongues in our cheeks, while we're waiting for the time of gracious living with liqueurs in the wardroom, Malaga in the Nobles' Club, and girls in the house of joy—taking our cue from you, our seniors. Hence the conclusion—to hell with this democratic farce! Make officers of us, the Navy's highest caste, teach us to command the clouds in square rig and rear Kozlovs for ourselves and not to blush when a sailor dashes like mad to pick up a glove you have dropped. Either we are future officers or hairy students, like those chaps who go among the people."

Nikolai Livitin made a wry face.

"Who do you associate with at that College of yours to get such guardsman's ideas from? Get yourself licked into shape, Yuri Livitin. Your trouble's young blood. I used to resent the swab too. Thought I'd get to know the sailor's soul through the swab. Like hell I did. The devil himself would break his neck in the attempt. Don't forget it's that famous muzhik soul on which opinion is so widely divided among enlightened fiction writers. Some believe that it's a holy of holies with the Lord presiding there in person, while others argue that it's a pretty dirty, swinish thing—pinching girls' bottoms, guzzling vodka, setting fire to a landowner's manor. But our Commander thinks differently. You should talk to him—not until you're promoted, though, or he's likely to put you under arrest—he'll tell you straight: Make the sailor crawl, and he'll respect you; if you don't, he'll make you crawl, and then the Navy's done for."

"A policeman's philosophy," Yuri snorted.

"It's jolly good advice, if only you grasp the spirit of it. We must use a red-hot iron to sear all the wrong ideas out of that famous soul, be it a temple or just a bag of dung. The Navy has no use for them. I'm terribly thirsty. Where's that confounded Kozlov got to?"

Lieutenant Livitin reached out towards the bell button. He lay there large, clean, strong and indolent. He had a good-looking pouting

mouth, his eyes were wide-set and serene, and his hands big, long-fingered. The army subaltern in the train had not seen Nikolai Livitin; compared to him, Yuri was the ugly duckling, who would one day grow up into as fair and lusty a swan. Yuri sat gawkily, his shoulders still narrow, his neck thin, and on his right cheek a youthful pimple rubbed over with alum and powder.

Kozlov anticipated the bell. He stepped carefully across the coaming, a tray balanced in his hand.

"What a time you've been, you camel!" the Lieutenant grumbled. It was a tradition aboard the *Generalissimo* to swear elegantly at the men. Current usage favoured epithets such as "camel", "cow", "meathead" and even "millstone". The officers vied with each other in coining them, and the most ingenious were adopted in current use.

"I had to go to the mess steward, sir. The seaman steward didn't have your brand," Kozlov answered, setting down the tray and removing the ash-tray.

"Good boy, Kozlov. I take back the camel!" Livitin said gaily, swinging his legs over the side of the bunk and sitting up.

"Thank you, sir," Kozlov answered quietly, and emptying the ash-tray into his hand (so as not to disturb his master by coming back again), he restored it to its place and went out. Yuri gulped down the foaming beer and said, licking his upper lip:

"According to you, the ideal sailor is an automaton."

"Exactly, Yuri. That's the wisdom of the service in a nutshell. That's what the whole system tends to, a system that has been developed through the centuries. The making of the automaton is difficult, but the prescription for it is simple. You take a country lad, Ivan Vulgaris, of military age—twenty-one, preferably half-illiterate. During his first winter this raw recruit has rules, regulations and tradition hammered into his head. The hammering is done thoroughly and ably—with none of the leniency shown to gentlemen like you—until all the chaff is threshed out. The result, so to say, is a rough cast of the sailor-to-be, a senseless, obedient machine into which, as into clay, you have to breathe the spirit of the naval service. You get throw-outs in the process—chiefly those who have finished the municipal four-grade school, or, still worse, some technical college. These don't reach the finishing stage. They're no good at all, and you're damn lucky if they scrape through their term of service without mucking up their record sheets. But a good casting with no ideas in its head except rules and regulations and a sense of what will be shall be, goes through the further finishing process in the ship. Here we all have a hand in it every minute of the day. D'you

think I like tumbling out of Fenia's at six in the morning, and at eight having to stand like an idiot, reporting to the Captain: 'Number four turret all correct, sir'? But I have to, not for my own sake, but for the sake of Ivan. This Ivan must believe with his whole soul that if at eight o'clock sharp the flag is not hoisted and the officers don't report, then one minute past eight will see the end of the world. Or d'you think I like leaving Irina standing in the street while I swear under my breath at a sailor off another ship for not saluting? Every one of your Ivans must be made to feel that there is a special hidden meaning in all this, so important that it has to be religiously, punctiliously observed everywhere till the end of time. Never let a sailor see that the king is naked. Play the fool with a straight face. Call up the guards and the band to do the side honours and send them below again without using them the moment the Admiral appears on deck. Hear out the report that there are so many petty officers and seamen in the watch division, though you've got the watch-report in your hands. Make the sailor say 'thank you, sir' for praising him. Place him in report if he sits down at the flagstaff when on sentry-duty, although there's nothing for him to guard, as this is being done by the signalmen and the watch crew, and the flag is hauled down and stowed away in the hutch. When a fellow's been through this mill that precious Russian soul of his will be as clean as the quarterdeck—no temple, no bag of dung, and most important of all, no surprises."

"Get along with you!" Yuri said, smiling. "You're just acting the cynic."

"No I'm not! I'm talking to you as man to man, and please don't betray my confidences. Of course, being a young man, you can't swallow these home-truths about the human soul. Besides, your head's stuffed with Stanyukovich, I see. He describes it all very well, I must say. It's a hell of a job, though, looking after a whole company of human souls. If you started looking into their troubles you wouldn't see the target at firing-practice. But commanding a hundred and twenty-four bluejackets is easy as anything. Take life simply, my boy, and look at the root of things. Life belongs to the strong, but you can't be strong unless you understand how life is arranged. Accept this bedtime aphorism and finish your beer. *Din skål, min skål. . . .*"

"*Alla vackra flickors skål!*"* Yuri came back, raising his glass. "Your cynical talk doesn't make pleasant hearing, though. According

* "Here's to you, here's to me, here's to all the pretty girls"—a Swedish toast.

to you, I'm being polished too. What do you think I am—a work piece?"

"Of course. Only you're made of more delicate material and so you need finer machining. Do you see anything of Alexander Pakhomov?"

"U-hu," Yuri mumbled into his glass.

"You were still doing it in your pants when he and I used to quarrel at school. He was a Red, you know, used to go to meetings. I socked him once—we had an argument about the flag. He called it a rag, and I used to take things seriously in those days. But you should see him now, clinking his spurs and standing stiff at attention when the 'rag' is carried past—even a foreign one. And what polishing did he get? Just two years in the Nikolayevsky Cavalry College, and instead of that wild shock of hair, a sleek head, and inside it thoughts all put through their paces, keeping their distance, as at the drill ground. So there you are! You and I have been brought up to the idea of military service from childhood, and if Alexander Pakhomov has been licked into shape, then the system must be well thought out."

"D'you mean to say that grooming a mare can affect a fellow's mentality like that?" Yuri said caustically. "D'you want me to believe that a swab is going to do that for me too?"

"Don't get sore at the swab, Yuri. The swab's a great thing. It's the swab and brasso that keep the fleet going. Do you really imagine you're being trained for three years just to polish the brasswork? It isn't so difficult to grasp. The thing is that you're trained from youth to do things the whole sense of which is their senselessness. How d'you like that for a paradox!"

The lieutenant rewarded himself with a draught of beer.

"There's really no sense in cleaning the brasswork when the sky's overcast and it's going to rain in half an hour—yet you do it and don't stop to think. There's just as little sense in an Officer of the Day asking the Commander's permission to pipe to dinner, when he knows that that permission can't be withheld. Or me, say, in going ashore, asking leave of the Officer of the Day, who is my junior, when I have leave from the Commander. Yet all these senseless things are essential to us, to the Ivans, and to you, the in-betweens. For one thing, they are the clothing on the naked king; secondly, they stand for the Establishment; thirdly, the stern necessity of observing and knowing these thousands of rules keeps a man safe from dangerous reasoning, such as mine. A serviceman should always be kept busy, or he will begin to think—and that, as we know from

the tale of the turkey, is bad for the health. Hand me that green book there, will you. I'll read you the sailor's Bible."

Yuri went up to the bookcase. A book on Hatha Yoga stood squeezed between Averchenko's stories and Helmersen's *Manual of Seamanship*. The *Articles of War* leaned against a bright-coloured volume of Severyanin's poetry, an English dictionary against *The Other Woman*—the handiwork of Artsibashev. Admiral Makarov's *Naval Tactics* was squeezed incongruously between French yellow-backs, whose very titles showed that the Lieutenant kept up his practice in foreign languages by enjoyable literature. The green book was discovered in the serious-minded company of *A Course of Naval Artillery* and Semyonov's *The Pay-Off*, and proved, on withdrawal, to be Admiral Schantz's *Instructions*, published in 1865. Nikolai Livitin turned over the pages.

"The old boy knew his onions all right! There are philosophic ideas here about the education of youth, some of them real gems. Listen to this: 'I have noticed that officers have talks in the evenings with midshipmen on subjects unconnected with the Navy, such as theatres, politics, and kinsfolk. Officers would do well to remember that the days midshipmen spend in training are irretrievable, that a thinking young man may easily get harmful ideas into his head, and that a midshipman with ideas in his head is like a man who wears soiled smelly linen under his frock coat. I trust these officers will realise how thoughtless this behaviour of theirs is and will in future practise private conversations only with the aim of teaching the future officers seamanship and ship routine in the spirit of naval service—things, which, unfortunately, I see very little of in the fleet—and that they will not corrupt young minds with inappropriate conversations.' Get that? That's what I call the right education!"

"It can't be very right when a lieutenant of the Russian Imperial Navy says things that ordinary civilians are condemned to chain-gangs for saying," Yuri said sarcastically. This brother of his was showing off his wit, trying to be clever.

"And so they ought to be. I'd have them hanged," Livitin said blandly. "Civilians have no right to guess at these things. The lieutenant is talking to his midshipman brother, who is joining the great priesthood of the sea service, and what he's telling him is off the record, for his own instruction. Thus did the naive neophyte once learn with dismay from the hoary old priest that the oil from Isis's navel was pressed out with a little pump, and having learned this, he kept it to himself, because the multitude of the faithful would

have separated the said neophyte into his integrant parts if he had tried to share his secret with them. So keep your mouth shut, too. Don't grow up a fool, and try to grasp what the naval service is all about."

"If I understood it that way I'd have to chuck it up. Why do you stick it yourself when you kill all the charm and meaning of naval service with your nihilist analysis?" Yuri said, annoyed with himself for not being able to answer with a torrent of vehement and forceful protest. The words struggled inside him, but they were stale from frequent use—words like Duty, Country, the Invincibility of Russian Arms. They had lost half their meaning and were no good for crushing that cool cynicism of his brother's.

"Why do I stick it? You might as well ask me why I live!" the lieutenant said with a wry smile. "It's one of those accursed questions, which baffled even Tolstoy in his old age. As to why I stick it, I'll answer you straight away. First"—he started bending down his fingers with their large shining nails—"I'm not one who will set the Thames on fire, so it's no use me hanging around the universities, probing the mysteries of creation. Father didn't leave the two of us enough to live in clover in a villa of our own, so it's better to serve with honour than to wear your trousers out on an office stool. Secondly, because the whole thing appeals to me—all this brilliant display, routine, the whole of this splendid machine of steel and men, and if you'd like to know—the sea itself. It's all firm, unshakeable, eternal and beautiful. My third reason is a simple one—the life suits me. I work, eat, sleep, go ashore, I have comfort, honour, and authority. These things don't grow on bushes."

"I thought perhaps, for decency's sake, you'd say a word about defending your country, serving the Tsar!" Yuri said, angered now in real earnest.

"That's a good 'un!" laughed Nikolai. His laugh was infectious and he took his time over it. His strong teeth, saved from destruction by gold fillings, were white and even, his eyes gay and mocking. "Yes, Mr. Livitin, I quite forgot about it—of course I serve to defend crown and country from enemies internal and external, etc., etc., see *Rules for the Young Sailor*. I thought you'd grown out of cadet-boy's patriotism. These things are taken for granted. If crown and country go to hell, where should we be! We all exist for war. It's for war that we're polishing up these Ivans and ourselves. We rub away for years at the brass and the men for the sake of fifteen minutes' firing at an enemy ship, to settle the thorny question of who is to feed the fishes—we or they? These things, too, are so well

known that it's bad form to speak about them. Some day you've got to lay down your life for king and country to pay for all the good things you've been enjoying at their expense."

Yuri leapt to his feet, beside himself.

"Look here, Nikolai, please stop this talk! I can't make you out—either you're just poking fun at me for nothing better to do, or you're having one of your heart-searching moments and are sneering at everything and everybody. Don't I know you're an honest and splendid officer! Don't I know your eyes gleam at the thought of plugging a shell into the *Moltke* or the *Deutschland*! Why this play-acting?"

The lieutenant smiled amusedly as he watched his brother gesticulating.

"If you want to convince anyone, Yuri; don't gesticulate and don't shoot off a thousand words a minute. Excitement is unbecoming in a man who knows his own worth. D'you mean to say the fact that the oil from the navel of Isis didn't drip by itself affected you so strongly as to unnerve you? I thought you knew better. Don't you see that the weapon is in the hands of the man who knows the hidden meaning of things. I'm giving that weapon into your hands. While you're still young, learn how to play the fool with a straight face—you'll be invincible then. Never take things seriously. Everything in the world is dust, except your own peace of mind."

"I suppose that's why you smoke hashish and lay awake at nights when Irina talks to some other man for half an hour?" Yuri said challengingly, touching a raw spot.

The lieutenant got up and buttoned the collar of his tunic.

"Yes, because that concerns me personally. Irina is mine, and everything that's mine must be sacred for others. The world is me, all else is made for my pleasure. The only thing in life to be taken seriously is your own soul. Do its bidding. The world may crumble together with fleet, country, throne and all the abstract notions about duty, honour, and so forth, but your soul will always remain with you. And if you have served it 'faithfully and honestly, without sparing life or limb, as becomes a loyal subject',* the ruin of the universe will not worry you much. Come along, let's get a breath of fresh air before turning in. Put your jumper straight."

The lieutenant went up to the mirror, patted his hair, switched off the light and opened the door.

Behind it, in the passageway, stood a middle-aged sailor in an

* Words of the Oath of Allegiance.

expectant attitude. He wore a peaked cap and a whistle, and had badges on his heavy sloping shoulders. His jumper clung to his soft, almost feminine chest, and was evidently wet with perspiration—it was hot in the passageway.

“Waiting for me, Seryozhin?” Livitin senior asked, halting in the doorway. “Why didn’t you knock? Come in.”

“I didn’t want to disturb you, sir, seeing as you had your brother visiting you,” Seryozhin said in his thick slow voice, walking in and taking off his cap.

“Let me recommend to you Chief Petty Officer Seryozhin, the prop and pillar of my company. Let me get to the desk, Yuri.”

“Hullo, Seryozhin,” Yuri said, smiling.

“Good-evening, sir!” Seryozhin barked, and turned at once to the lieutenant. “May I report, sir?”

He laid his papers and pencil on the table and kept up a rumbling commentary as he deftly received the signed sheets from the lieutenant’s hands:

“It’s ‘field day’ tomorrow, sir—we’ll need soda, soap and cleaning rags from the bos’n. These are hospital tickets for Pakhromenko and Zikin. Silin’s on the defaulter’s list, please write in the number of days arrest.”

“Wait a minute! Who ran him in?”

“I made the order out myself, sir, seeing as Lieutenant Greve caught him in dirty rig this morning in the picket-boat.”

“The cells is too much for that. Make him stand for an hour tomorrow in full gear.”

“Very good, sir. A month’s pay for the two in hospital will have to be issued, sir.”

“Yes,” the lieutenant said, looking round. “Act the state bank, Yuri, will you—I’m too lazy to open the box. Have you got small Russian money?”

“Only markkas, I’m afraid.”

“Two rubles fifty is all we need, sir. Don’t bother, I’ll pay them out of my own money,” Seryozhin said. He carefully collected the papers and drew himself up to attention. “Will there be any instructions, sir?”

“There will,” Livitin said, smiling. “First, I want the company shipshape” (Seryozhin grinned complacently), “and secondly, my godson has probably cut a tooth. Give him this from me with my best wishes.”

Livitin opened a drawer and got out a narrow case of polished wood

Seryozhin flushed with pleasure and glanced proudly at Yuri as he received the gift. Yuri smiled sheepishly, not knowing what to say or how to take this democratic gesture on his brother's part.

"Thank you very much, sir," Seryozhin said with dignity. "Allow me to thank you for my wife and son too."

"Give them my regards when you go ashore. You may go now."

Seryozhin went out, holding the case against his bulging bosom, and the lieutenant looked at Yuri and burst out laughing.

"What do you think of him?"

"Splendid specimen. D'you know who he reminds me of? Afinogen. . . ."

Livitin recalled how Afinogen used to drone away of a morning in their father's room with the devotion and zeal of an old servant who had grown up in their home. He laughed at the recollection.

"My relations with him are approximately the same. He runs the whole business for me, all the hundred and twenty-four souls. He's worth his weight in gold, reliable as a rock. Here's another commandment for you—choose thy petty officers, and thou shalt find peace in thy soul and goodwill among thy superiors."

"And be a godfather to them," Yuri added maliciously.

"Not necessarily. At Gavril Nepovinsky's wedding I gave the bride away. That's why things are in apple-pie order in his turret and in Seryozhin's company. Learn the mysteries of naval service, you goon. Encouragement and a gift don't cost much, but they'll buy you devotion. Learn not only to punish but to shower favours on the men you need, so that you win the love and confidence of those you rule. By the way, I've a present coming for you too—you'll be grateful to me as long as you live."

"For tooth cutting?" Yuri said, smiling. "If so, you're too late—I've cut all my teeth."

"Not all of them, Yuri. When you cut these here"—Nikolai tapped the star on his shoulder strap with his fingernail—"then you'll get your present."

"Not Kozlov, by any chance? I'd like nothing better."

The lieutenant wagged a taunting finger.

"Nothing doing. You can forget about Kozlov. Kozlov will lay me in the grave and close the eyes of his admiral! I'll never part with Kozlov. I've got an eye on a bride for him, I'll see him married, and have his wife attend on Irina."

"And when the kids start coming, you'll make use of them too, I suppose?"

"You needn't be sarcastic. I've chosen a man for you too. Belokon, his name is. Seryozhin's got him in hand now—he's a petty officer. When are you due for promotion?"

"Fifth of October nineteen seventeen," Yuri answered.

"In three years' time, exactly, he'll be a re-enlisted serviceman. He'll make a perfect Chief Petty Officer in your company. Strike up an acquaintance with him now, and drop him a hint, a gentle one, otherwise he'll have too high an opinion of himself. Say thank you. Nobody gave me a leg up, and here's your brother thinking of you and taking care of you day and night. Scrape a foot and kiss my hand!"

"I thank you very much, sir," Yuri said in a deep bass voice. "Allow me to thank you for my future wife too, sir."

They went out. The officers' passageway was brightly lit up and the curtains over the open cabin doors stood out in dark soft patches against the white varnish of the bulkheads. The strip of rubber running along the passageway deadened footsteps, and the fans sucking out the hot reeking air from the mess decks kept up a steady drone in the wide ducts. Yuri turned left towards the ladder leading to the upper deck.

"Belay that!" said the lieutenant. "You can't use the Captain's ladder! We go this way."

On coming away from the lieutenant, Chief Petty Officer Seryozhin sent for Silin. Throwing himself back in his chair, he contemplated Silin's freckled anxious face the while he tapped his finger on the table.

"Well, fathead, you can thank your lucky stars. If not for me you'd have got five days. See that?"

He flicked the order for Silin's arrest, which Livitin had crossed out. The figure "5" was written large in the column headed "days".

"He wasn't half wild, let me tell you! What, he says, dirty trousers in my boat! Did he swear! Make out an order, he says, give him five days' cells, the damn'd crow—meaning you. Naturally, I made it out. Took it to him. He sat there fuming, didn't even look up. I laid the paper in front of him. He started to pick up his pen, so I plucked up courage and says: 'Excuse me, sir,' I says, 'I'd like to put in a word for Silin. He's a good man, Silin is. Never had anything against him. You know what Lieutenant Greve is, sir, he sees a mountain in a speck o'dust. The man dirtied his trousers with coal, didn't have time to shift.' We talked it over. Ah, well, he says, I'll let him off, seeing as you're asking me. I wouldn't do it for anybody else—you can tell him that from me. Savvy?"

"Thank you, sir, thank you very much," Silin said, a glad smile creeping into his embarrassed face. "Of course, sir, everything depends on you, on the way you report it."

"That's just it. When I'd reported, he just crossed out the order. 'An hour's sentry-duty,' he says. That's all. Here's the order—you can tear it up or send it to your wife—it'll give her an idea what service in the Navy is like when you've got a kind-hearted Chief Petty Officer."

"The company's glad you're with us, sir. Thank you, sir."

"Send it to the missus," the Chief Petty Officer repeated complacently. "She's a seamstress, I believe?"

"Aye, sir, she does a bit o' sewing."

"Write and ask her how much she'll take to sew some baby shirts for my son. He's the lieutenant's godson. Here's a spoon he's given me for him as a present. He thinks well of me, the lieutenant does. You remember this, and tell the others, too—what I say to the lieutenant goes. Don't forget to write home, will you?"

"She'll do it for nothing, sir, out of gratitude."

"None of that!" Seryozhin said, lifting a finger. "I don't like that kind of talk—you know me, Silin. Who talks about gratitude? It's against the regulations. Let her make the shirts, I'll pay her what she asks. Tell her to sew them for a one-year-old. Don't forget. Well, run along, Silin."

Seryozhin sighed contentedly. The spoon shone in its case, the baby's shirts had been ordered, and Seryozhin would pay "what she asked" for them—and she'd ask a quarter of the price, of course. You had to have the knack of running a company, you had to use your brains to teach the men to love you, to earn their respect and gratitude.

CHAPTER 3

The oval door of the stern torpedo-flat, like the whole superstructure itself, was of twelve-inch armour. It was operated by a special motor working from the battle circuit; it was therefore open now and the chill air of daybreak blew into it. Yuri slept naked, as prescribed by hygiene and Naval College traditions, and the chill air made him stir and draw up the thick sheet, which smelt pleasantly of fresh linen and his brother's wardrobe. The beer would probably not have troubled him till waking time, but the cold and the fact that he had stirred precipitated matters. He opened his eyes

reluctantly. He didn't like the idea of getting up, but he would have to.

Next to him, on a similar camp-bed, which Kozlov brought every evening from the boatswain's store, slept Lieutenant Livitin. He, too, slept naked, quiet and correct, without uttering any sounds or blowing spittle from his compressed lips. Even in sleep a good officer should be decorous and inspire respect. At the Naval College the officer of the day would wake the fourteen-year-old cadet and say in a low voice: "Cadet Livitin, stop snoring! Lie on your right side and breathe through your nose! Hands out—on top of the blanket!"

He would have to get up, though. On the rug by the bedside lay his socks, cross-barred shirt, and mauve Lislethread drawers (on leave one was allowed to wear one's own underwear). The colour of the drawers was soft and pleasing, the texture fine, and the girdle of silk. Yuri had the tact not to come on a visit to his brother wearing those bright-red silk drawers, which his messmate, Baron Medem, called "the maidens' ruin" and which were worn exclusively for visits to the brothel. There was no sign of the trousers and jumper, however. Yuri sat up, alarmed. In the blue half-light of dawn the torpedo-tubes, burnished with furious zeal, gleamed against the curved bulkhead. The steel deck-sheathing was clean and empty. There was no sign of either trousers or jumper, and even his cap-cover was gone. They were far below in the ship's belly. Seeing that the midshipman's clothes had had a day's wear and the young gentleman had brought no luggage with him, Kozlov took the opportunity while the brothers were sleeping to wash and mangle their clothes and hang them up in the drying-room, asking the cook to have a hot iron ready by call hands. In the morning he would bring the clothes back clean and ironed, and coughing respectfully over the lieutenant and the midshipman, he would say quietly:

"It's seven bells, sir."

But now it was only a few minutes past three. Trust a fool to overreach himself. The midshipman tried to fall asleep again, but the beer was relentless. What could he do, damn it! He couldn't very well go past the Officer of the Day in this ridiculous state if he wanted to go to the officers' latrines, which were clean and fragrant with pine-scented deodorisers. He'd have to foot it to the "head country", all the way to the forecabin, which stank like hell of carbolic and ammonia. A pleasant prospect! Yuri, with an air of decision, pulled on his shirt and reached for his drawers....

Boatswain Pakhom Netoporchuk slowly paced the upper deck, surveying his domain. He was a burly, broad-shouldered figure of a man with a deep chest from which hung a nickel-plated whistle.

This whistle, known as the boatswain's call, is a flat boxlike little thing with a hollow bead at the end and a bent pipe fixed into it. Blowing this whistle is a special art. You have to take it in your hand with the bead resting in your palm, crook your fingers over it as if playing on a fiddle, and blow into the pipe. According to the force with which you blow and the movement of your fingers over the hole, the whistle changes its notes from a deep mellow sound to a high shrill one. To achieve a trill, you have to make the sound "trr" with your tongue. There are as many as fifteen different tunes, which no music notation can reproduce. These tunes, like many other naval traditions, are passed on by word of mouth from generation to generation, like the secret of painting the ship's sides or feathering an oar.

Every petty officer, boatswain's mate and boatswain receives a whistle in lifelong possession as an emblem of authority. The petty officer will always be able to exercise that authority. The whistle hangs from a chain, and that, too, is nickel-plated. This chain, by virtue of the same tradition, may be used as an encouragement to laggards by being brought into contact with the soft part of the sailor's anatomy (long since known in the Russian Navy as the "official" part, because it belonged to the sailor no more than did the rest of the ship's equipment). One did not take offence at the blow, which was simply rough familiarity of the senior-to-junior kind. The whistle is held in high esteem by the petty officer, who usually has his own, made of silver, on a silver chain. Strictly speaking, this is a breach of form, but the officers look with approval at a silver whistle on a bemedalled chest. By petty officer standards, the acquisition of a silver whistle is a token of the same love for the Navy and the same passion for naval swagger as those demonstrated by the Captain of the cruiser *Bogatyr*, who had his ship's sides and superstructures painted with enamel paint at his own expense.

Boatswain Netoporchuk was not one of your tiddly petty officers. He was a dour-looking man, painstaking, and attentive to duty, but he was no fop. He was always dressed neatly according to form in a baggy sort of way. Other officers have their uniform trousers altered to fit snugly at the back without creases. Netoporchuk had no time for such trifles—the ship was much too big for that, and she had a thousand and one little things in her that needed attending to and

keeping a watch over. Netoporchuk was Boatswain of the Quarter-deck, his "country" being the whole upper deck from stern to aft funnel, with everything that it contained. It was his job to look after the things which others used, such things as hawsers, running-tackle, ladders, pilot-ladders, reel-covers, hawser-reels, scrapers, squeegees, and other wash-deck gear, and sand. Everything on ship-board had its master, and these masters in turn were ruled by Netoporchuk, who was under the Chief Boatswain, and the Chief Boatswain was under the Commander. The pattern of subordination in a ship was like a complex electric wiring circuit, all converging to a single point—the Captain.

Officially the quarterdeck was now in the charge of the Petty Officer of the Watch. He paced the starboard side of the deck—sixty-two paces from the stern superstructure to the second turret. But the boatswain on duty must keep an eye on everything within his range of vision, no matter where he is. Every petty officer, even when off duty, is also obliged to restore order wherever he notices a breach of it. The petty officer must live up to his badges and his whistle, and cannot overlook lubberlyness in a ship's trim. Netoporchuk passed down the deck, peering at every little thing as he went along. Things could be cleared and put in order at any moment—that was what the Watch was for; if they were engaged, you had the Watch below, and both of them answered the whistle.

Netoporchuk halted at the chocks of launch No. 2.

These are steel cradles padded with leather cushions on which the boat rests as in an armchair when hoisted inboard. The leather of the forechocks was scratched and frayed. It needed oiling to soften the loose strands, which could then be rubbed smooth and shiny with pumice. That job would be given in the morning to the man in charge of launch No. 2—2nd Class Petty Officer Savochkin of Company 2, Division 4. The boat's number told you at once who the crew was; this system of numbering things and men aboard a warship is practical and simple to understand, like all life afloat. The thing is to have mind and heart tabulated like the Orders of the Day posted on the bridge.

Netoporchuk had been tabulated long ago. These changeless figures and columns had been etching themselves into his soul for fourteen years. For fourteen years, day in, day out, call-hands had sounded—in summer always at 5.30, in winter always at 6. For fourteen years the whistle had piped "up spirits" at noon, the bugles had greeted the hoisting of the flag at 8 a.m., and prayers and reports were held at 8 p.m. Fourteen years of keeping the ship in trim had blotted

out for ever the mess and muddle of village life. Every floor had become a deck, every staircase a ladder, every wall a bulkhead, and every window a scuttle. Every man became either an officer and a sailor, or a civilian—the latter something unintelligible and disorderly. Every act was one permitted or not permitted. Given hearts and minds tabulated in inerasable columns of the ship's routine, everything was very simple.

"Where are you off to? Go below, you son-of-a-gun!" Netoporchuk suddenly shouted, taking a smack at the drawers of a skinny sailor with the chain of his whistle as the fellow emerged from behind the chocks. He was in his underclothes, and capless, too, the village lout!

The sailor started back as if he had been stung, and cried out in a shrill voice:

"How dare you, you dolt!"

"Wha-at?" Netoporchuk said with slow wonder. "You're half-asleep, you bird. Wake up! You're talking to the Boatswain. Where the hell are you going in your underclothes? Where's your cap?"

"I'm going to the heads. . ." the sailor stammered.

"So I see. The piss has gone to your head, too, by the looks of it. What's your company?"

The sailor hesitated, then said quietly:

"I don't belong here. Let me go."

"What d'you mean, you 'don't belong'? If you're a sailor you should know how to behave in any ship. Is that the way to address a superior? Say 'I'm sorry, sir'!"

"I'm sorry, sir," the sailor said, his voice sinking still lower.

"I should say you are! Running around with no trousers on!" Netoporchuk was not a bad fellow really, not one to pick on a man. And this sailor seemed to be a timid, silly chap. "Shoo off down that hatchway, quick! The Officer of the Day is coming, you'll catch it!"

But it was too late—the Officer of the Day came in sight. Lieutenant Vetkin had heard the shout breaking upon the silence of daybreak, and he approached the scene, toying with his dirk.

"Who's there? Is that you, Netoporchuk? What's all the noise about?"

"Sorry, sir," Netoporchuk said, saluting. "A sailor here came up on the deck half-asleep, just as he is."

He pointed at the sailor "just as he was" with his left hand. Lieutenant Vetkin took in the disreputable figure at a glance. He couldn't let the man off, as discipline would suffer. He was guilty of an offence and would have to be punished for it.

"What's the idea—" the lieutenant began, but after a second glance, he broke off and bit his lip. "Ahem," he muttered after a pause, then turned to Netoporchuk. "Leave us for a moment, will you."

It was an awkward situation. This was Livi's brother, of course—he had dined last night at the lieutenant's end of the table, facing Vetkin. It *was* a disgrace, though. Any "nozzler" would know better than that. On the other hand he was a guest of the wardroom, an officer's brother. Damned awkward! What a crazy idea, coming up on deck in his pants! Is that what they taught them at the College? A silly business, damn it!

Lieutenant Vetkin found a way out, though. An offence had to be punished, but there were various ways of inflicting punishment. You did not necessarily have to put the fellow under arrest or on sentry-duty. There were other, no less humiliating ways of puncturing his vanity. He'd enliven the watch and teach the young fellow a lesson at the same time. His brother had called him Yuri, if he was not mistaken.

"You're up early, I see, Yuri Petrovich? Good-morning!" Lieutenant Vetkin said affably.

Yuri looked as if he had had a fresh coat of red lead put on him. Crimson, all of a sudden stickily clammy, he wished the steel deck would open and swallow him up. If the lieutenant, taking him for a sailor, had given him a grand blow-up, he could have got away with it just by saying "Sorry, sir" and disappearing down the nearest hatchway to enjoy a laugh at breakfast in the wardroom over the tragic collision between physiology and the zeal of an orderly. But what now? Yuri had too little experience in the ways of the world and lacked that cultivated sixth sense of the officer that tells a man when he can address a superior jocularly by his nickname, when he can use his name and patronymic, and when he must just say "sir". This is an art, a subtle play on shadings of relationship and circumstances of the moment. Here even young midshipmen, in the relaxed mood of after-dinner coffee, sometimes drop a brick that exposes them to a nasty snub from their superiors, after which the coffee loses its taste and life doesn't seem worth living.

Yuri hesitated between the flippant tone of his brother and the dash and swagger of a midshipman of the Naval College. Done in pants, both of these would have looked silly, and so he said nothing, blushing furiously and dithering awkwardly. The lieutenant was cheerfully blind to the fact that the midshipman was in his underclothes.

"I say, midshipman," Vetkin went on, taking his arm and gently propelling him towards the quarterdeck. On the quarterdeck there stood the Corporal of the Gangway, the Quartermaster, the messenger, the man at the bell, the side boy. And all of them beheld the amazing pair—the immaculate lieutenant in dazzling white, and the ridiculous capless figure in shirt, mauve pants, and shoes on bare feet. They all saw it in the rapidly increasing light.

"I say, midshipman," Vetkin continued in a deliberately loud voice, "isn't there a Count Bobrinsky in your company at the College—a lanky chap?"

"Yes. . . . There is. . . ."—the words were squeezed out like dry toothpaste.

"Nice young man. One day, when I visited your Naval College—"

The last words were emphasised for the benefit of the sentry at the flagstaff, who, preserving regulation immobility of pose and countenance, oriented his left ear towards the conversation in an attempt to guess what queer fish this was in his mauve pants and shirt. The torture continued. The lieutenant whiled away the morning watch with a desultory conversation on a variety of innocent topics, inwardly amused at the midshipman's discomfiture and pretending not to notice the spreading grins on the faces of the men on the watch—he knew the midshipman had noticed them before him. The lesson was courteous, brilliant, unforgettable. The funniest part about it was that besides the mental agony, the midshipman was undergoing physical torture, too. Obviously, he hadn't dashed out in his pants like that just to take a stroll.

"Excuse me, my dear boy," the lieutenant said at last, relenting. "Much as I like talking to you, I must attend to my duties. Good-night! I must take a walk down the deck, those sailors are always crawling out of bed undressed. I'd turn in again if I were you. The flag won't be hoisted for quite a time yet."

He let go the midshipman's arm, stopping before the hatchway leading to the torpedo-flat.

Should he tell the truth? And again run the gauntlet of those grinning faces? No one would stop him now that the Officer of the Day had not done it. No, it was better to wait, gnashing his teeth and squirming, till that confounded Kozlov brought him his clothes. Yuri took his leave and went up the ladder.

Lieutenant Vetkin chuckled and went back to the quarterdeck to resume his duties after the comic interlude.

"Messenger!" he snapped his voice sharp as a whip lash.

"Sir?"

"Send that blockhead to me."

The first movement of a sailor sent on an errand should be to turn sharply as his hand drops from the salute; his second is the light springy trot peculiar to the Navy. The messenger made a dash after the midshipman, but midway doubt suddenly seized him. What blockhead? Hardly the one in the pants. The lieutenant would then have said, "Ask the midshipman to come here." There was the whole watch to choose from. All the men were blockheads when the lieutenant was displeased.

At the risk of bringing this displeasure on himself, the messenger went back to the Officer of the Day.

"Which one do you mean, sir?"

"That fellow . . . Netoporchuk."

Netoporchuk came trotting up from the forecastle and drew himself up within two paces of the irate lieutenant.

"What's the matter with you, you old fool? Are you blind?"

"Sorry, sir," Netoporchuk said blankly.

"Can't you tell a midshipman from a sailor after all those years of service? You sap. Calls himself a boatswain. What did you blow him up for? What business is it of yours, you blockhead?"

"Sorry, sir, it was because he was behind the chocks—"

"Chocks? What are you talking about? Can't you tell a midshipman when you see one?"

"Sorry, sir, but I didn't see the pants straight away on account of the chocks. I didn't notice he had gentleman's pants on him till you started talking to him. I'd never have taken the liberty, sir. I know my duty, sir, but I didn't see the pants till afterwards."

Lieutenant Vetkin said, after a thoughtful pause:

"All right, you can go. Next time be more careful. Go and see Lieutenant Livitin tomorrow and apologise for the blunder. You'll mention the pants—you're right there."

"May I go now, sir?"

"Yes."

Netoporchuk moved away, disconcerted and gloomy. He worked off his bad temper on a sailor of the watch, who was leaning against the armour of the turret.

"Keep your arse off the paintwork, you gawk!"

The man sprang away from the conning-tower and looked back guiltily, as if he could really have soiled the paint with his clean jumper.

"Lolling about on the quarterdeck like a nob at the theatre and don't even notice disorder! Look at that!"

The hawser-reel to which Netoporchuk pointed looked in order, but a boatswain's eyes are keen.

"It isn't lashed up properly. You don't see what's going on under your nose. Haul it taut! That isn't a reel-cover, it's an old woman's skirt!"

A slim figure in a baggy white tunic with lieutenant's shoulder straps came down the ladder from the torpedo-flat. His cap was pulled down low over his forehead. The place was full of visiting officers. Here was another one mooning about! The sailor was lashing up the reel-cover, his backside stuck out in the officer's path. Netoporchuk gave him an angry push.

"Gangway! Can't you see?"

The sailor jumped aside, and both watched Midshipman Livitin making his slow and dignified way to the pine-scented officers' latrines, clad in his brother's tunic, cap and trousers.

The sailor gave a snort of laughter.

"What's tickling you?" the boatswain said menacingly.

"Sorry, sir, but it's so funny. . . . Only a little while ago you fetched him one with your chain, and now—"

"Cut the cackle! This will be funnier still if you get a taste of it!"

The fist he showed was big and useful-looking, but the gesture was made more in vexation with himself than with any intent to use it. Netoporchuk never hit his men, although, in his day, he had received his full share of clouts and clumps. Using one's fists on the men was forbidden nowadays. On joining the ship a year ago, the Commander had called all the boatswains and petty officers together and told them tersely and impressively, "You sons-of-bitches have been free with your hands. I don't want to hear any more complaints! In what regulations did you read anything about jaw-punching? It's a disgrace, get me? If I hear of anything, I'll have the puncher up in my cabin and clean his teeth for him so's he'll never do it again—I don't care what badges he may have. Is that clear?" Kornei, the Chief Boatswain, had listened to this speech with displeasure and afterwards complained to the petty officers that it was unfair—they were not allowed to touch a man, but the officers had it all their own way. Take Lieutenant Greve, who hit Signalmán Gorbunov with his binoculars, or the Damage Controlman, who simply used his fist. But Netoporchuk had his own view of the matter: the officers were a gentlemen-class apart, they knew what they were doing.

The watch man, nevertheless, judiciously withdrew behind the reel, as if to adjust the cover. Netoporchuk stood brooding. What

a knockabout job the service was, at every step you got a bottle! Now he had to explain to Lieutenant Livitin in the morning how he had missed seeing his brother's pants in the dark! He had mistaken him for a sailor, it's true, but what a holy mess he'd made of it! A good seaman, let alone a boatswain, should have a quick eye for a gentleman (Netoporchuk thought of all officers generally as gentlemen, who led a gentleman's life and spoke and behaved like gentlemen). It wasn't the first time he had seen a man without his uniform and badges. There was the Paymaster, for instance, Mr. Budagov. He was very fond of joining the men at the booms at swimming races, and though he was stark naked in the water you could always tell him from a sailor. His body was white and soft, and though his head was shorn like the men's, it was kind of different, a gentleman's head with a gentleman's look in the eye. Try and give him a punch in the water and say you mistook him for a sailor. You'd get it in the neck afterwards. You have to know an officer in the dark, by sense of smell, you have to recognise him from a sailor through the armour.

To be sure, a midshipman was not an officer, but he was a gentleman, training to be an officer. You could dress them up in square rig, but the breed shows just the same. The way he yelled at me: "How dare you, you dolt!"—I should have guessed at once who he was, old idiot that I am. Christ, what a mess!

"Messenger!" Lieutenant Vetkin shouted, snapping shut the lid of his watch. "Run down to the servants' mess and find out whether Lieutenant Greve is up."

The messenger ran past Netoporchuk on his toes. You were not allowed to tramp heavily on the upper deck—there were cabins beneath it. He had no need to look at the clock to tell him it was a quarter to four. Ship's routine goes on through days, months and years, and every position of the clock hands has its appropriate act, every day of the week its billed job. In a man-of-war you did not have to think or guess. Netoporchuk arranged his fingers on his whistle and looked expectantly at the Officer of the Day.

"Call the morning watch!" Lieutenant Vetkin commanded.

Netoporchuk blew a long shrill blast on his whistle.

A Russian warship is inconceivable without the boatswain's whistle. Every command issued aboard the ship is preceded by the whistle. An order given by the Officer of the Day or the Commander flies pipe-driven along the ship from hatch to hatch, from mess to mess, till it tracks down the man or men it has been sent to. The seaman has developed a conditioned reflex to the sound—it

alerts him to the order that invariably follows. If it is an all-hands order, the pipe is preceded by the command: "Petty officers to the hatches!" Then all the petty officers scatter to their respective hatchways, crouch over them, seize their whistles, and put them to their mouths, while they draw a deep breath and keep a watchful eye on the quarterdeck or the bridge whence the order comes. The order, sung out, is drowned by the trilling whistles, and is then "repeated word for word by the petty officers in loud clear voices". Loud the voices certainly are, but contrary to regulation requirements, they are hoarse from too much shouting, or perhaps too much strong liquor.

The Petty Officer of the Watch, bending over the hatchway opposite the boatswain, blew a similar long shrill blast on his whistle.

A Russian man-of-war is inconceivable without the whistle. Its rhythmic calls give momentum to rope hauling, its strident insistent message helps the bugle of a morning to rouse the men from sleep; its warbling notes summon the crew to their noonday tot and it greets the hoisting and lowering of the ensign with a long drawn-out dying trill. When an officer comes aboard side honours are rendered him by side boys, whose function it is to man the gangway and help the officer out of the boat and up the ladder. For this purpose a special ceremonial crew is kept to do the side honours at all times of the day and night. The officer is piped on board by the petty officers of the watch and the gangway party with a long, soft and respectful whistle. When the officer has passed, they blow a curt derisive whistle dismissing the side boys, who turn smartly, run up the gang ladder, and disappear like so many performing dogs.

"Damn your bloody whistle!" a sailor said, turning over in his hammock, which was slung under the hatchway leading to the church deck. He said it under his breath but in any case his sleepy voice was drowned by the whistles, at the sound of which the hammocks slung from the deckhead began to sway like gigantic fruits unknown to botany. The occupants were stirring, tucking in their blankets and wondering sleepily whether this was call-hands or the morning watch.

Having piped out the tune, Neloporehuk lowered his head into the hatchway.

"Third division on deck! Lash up and stow!"

At this lusty deafening shout, Yegorehikov, a young sailor, leapt from his hammock in a wakening panic, and immediately received a violent blow on his forehead. The hammocks are slung close under the deck head to avoid sagging and prevent you sitting in them—hammocks are made for lying down in.

"What's bitten you, you sap?" Netoporchuk shouted down. "Go to sleep. Don't you know your division?"

The number of Yegorchikov's hammock ended with a 4, and so he could have another full hour's sleep. Division 3 occupied the same deck, only slightly forward, and the call was meant for them. But Yegorchikov was young; his silly mug had broken out in blotches and a bump was growing on his forehead.

"Go to sleep, you bird!" Netoporchuk repeated almost affectionately. "Don't you know when you're being called or not?"

The place came alive with sound—early morning coughings and throat clearings, the patter of bare feet, and swift noiseless activity among the hammocks. The sailor is given five minutes to turn out, during which he has to dress, roll up his bedding neatly together with the lashings and carry it on deck to the nettings. He is given another five minutes in which to wash, run to the heads and have a smoke, and a last five minutes to stuff his belly with tea and a chunk of bread and yellow Russian butter before taking the watch.

Lieutenant Greve's servant started to wake him half an hour before the watch was due to come on. He did it with coughings, and persuasive whisperings, persistently but respectfully importunate.

"Your watch is coming on, sir. It's seven bells, sir."

Darkness and a scented peace reigned in the cabin. The officer slept sweetly.

"Your coffee's ready, sir. You'll be late, sir."

Sleep was all the sweeter because Greve had come back from "Fenia" with the last boat.

"Please, sir, wake up!"

"I hear you! Stop nagging!" Greve spoke up in a clear wide-awake voice. "What's the weather like?"

"It's fine, sir. Calm as anything."

"All right, run along! I'll get up in a minute."

But the servant did not go. He knew that that clear wide-awake voice was merely a ruse to get rid of him. In fact, the lieutenant had dozed off again.

"Please, sir, it's twelve minutes to—"

"All right, I'm getting up. How's the weather? Fine. Run along, Leshchikov."

The lieutenant curled himself up ecstatically between the fresh caressing sheets, and his eyes closed of themselves. His breathing became regular again. Leshchikov took his courage in both hands—the clock pointed to ten minutes to four—and drew the curtain of the porthole. Light and fresh air flooded the cabin. All at once the

springy bed became hard, the awakening rude, and life disgusting. The lieutenant sat up on his bunk, yawning and scowling.

"How many times have I told you not to draw that curtain, you chump! Wake me in the dark! You know it!"

"Sorry, sir!"

"You're late again, you ass."

"I couldn't wake you, sir."

"You're a damn liar! Get out, you millstone."

"You won't go to sleep again, sir, will you?" the servant enquired discreetly, but seeing by the lieutenant's face that he was fully awake, he slipped out. Water for teeth cleaning had been brought, the lieutenant's white uniform laid out on the armchair with a clean handkerchief in the pocket—everything had been seen to, and he had nothing more to do there. The lieutenant would not fall asleep now that he had got his rag out.

Greve had no time for his coffee—he had to dress with great care. Nobody would see the inside of his stomach, but a slack sock would be noticeable. Buttoning on his dirk, Lieutenant Greve went up to the ladder leading to the upper deck, and waited for the bell to strike. With the last stroke, according to the Stanyukovich tradition imbibed from boyhood, he arrived on deck to meet Vetkin. The two lieutenants halted for a moment, drew themselves up and saluted, then instantly dropped the cold official manner for their customary air of bored apathy.

"It's a dog's life, Gypsy, my darling!" Greve said with a prodigious yawn. "I'm as sleepy as anything. Let's have your report."

"Two funnels, two masts, Helsingfors to larboard, sea to starboard chockful o' water," Vetkin said languidly. "The Old Man's swinging the lead ashore. Send the boat for him at 7.30."

In their dealings with each other the officers of the *Generalissimo* cultivated a tone of airy indifference towards their duties calculated to accentuate the clockwork precision of ship routine where everything rolled along with mechanical ease, as if on well-greased rails; the watch should be so well kept that there should be nothing to report to the relieving watch; shipboard duties should be so efficiently organised as to preclude the unforeseen, and a good officer coming on deck to take charge of his watch, should know exactly what the regulations require to be reported to him. In any case, the instructions were written down for him in the order-book, in the Commander's own minute handwriting.

"You keep a pretty rotten lookout, Lieutenant Vetochnik," Greve drawled, taking in the deck and the sentry in a single keen glance.

"Daddy's not asleep, you know. At the moment he's in the Egyptian boudoir at Fenia's, making love to a red head."

"Not Hilda?" Vetkin said with lively interest. "I don't believe you!"

"Choose your words, my lord! I saw our Captain with my own eyes piloting her down the corridor into the Egyptian boudoir. Hilda was a bit tight, but very serious and concentrated, *comme un chien qui pisse dans un violon*."

"Trying to figure out how much she could squeeze out of the old geezer," Vetkin laughed, but seeing the petty officers approaching, he chased the grin from his face and drew himself up.

The men marched up stiffly in single file. The one in front stared stonily at Lieutenant Vetkin, as he mentally rehearsed the report he had been making for years. Four paces short of the lieutenant he halted, clicked his heels together and brought his hand smartly to his cap. The arm quivered slightly at the taut muscles of the elbow, the hand rested by the right temple, and the black moustache twitched.

"Watch set, sir—Division 3, Company 4, three petty officers, fourteen lower ratings, no sick list, one defaulter, eleven on shore duty, watch taken over in order."

He stepped aside, one pace to the left, with hand still at his cap, and another stepped into his place.

"Watch correct, sir. Nothing to report."

The lieutenants lowered their hands.

"Watch dismiss!" said Lieutenant Greve, and the petty officers, turning sharply about, dropped their hands and marched off to their divisions, which were drawn up confronting each other. There they blew their whistles into their men's faces and rapped out, sounding each separate syllable:

"Watch dismissed!"

The watch who were relieved turned and doubled to the hatches and those who had relieved the deck ran to their posts.

"All correct," said Lieutenant Vetkin.

"All correct," answered Greve. "Sleep well, duckie."

He watched Vetkin go, then, with narrowed eyes, nodded to the Petty Officer of the Watch, and moved for'ard along the starboard side, examining the deck as he went along. Although Vetkin had made the rounds of the deck before the shift, from this moment it was Lieutenant Greve who was responsible for the deck and for everything that happened on it. And there were a thousand things on the deck that were likely to put an Officer of the Day to shame.

The quarterdeck was deserted. The only one left there is the sentry standing by the bare flagstaff at the stern. He and the twelve-inch turret face each other across the deck, from which protrude the ventilator-cowls over the officers' cabins. The turret's guns point straight at the sailor's chest. It seems as if he has been put there to face an eternal firing squad of three twelve-inch muzzles, all aimed at the breast of a single sailor, day in day out for months, years and decades. The thin useless bayonet of his rifle does not move an inch—why should it? The sailor is bound to the flag of St. Andrew by the relentless chains of the service regulations. He can only stand there like a statue, guarding the repose of the Commanding Officer, who sleeps in his cabin underfoot. He can never leave his place, with those guns pointed at his breast. Their shells are almost man-high; they are as relentless and unfeeling as the articles of war, and like these articles, they are in the hands of those who are now sleeping in their cabins under the reliable protection of the silent muzzles pointed at the sailor.

To move that turret and turn the guns away from the sailor, the help of many men is needed—seamen gunners to work the gun-laying wheels in the turret; electricians to energise the reducer; torpedo-men to generate the current from the dynamo; stokers to raise the steam to turn the dynamo; and the whole crew to coal the ship to produce the steam.

And when all these men have done what is required of them, the guns will turn their muzzles away from the sailor and the sentry will turn his bayonet down, smashing the glass of the skylight, and bringing the splinters down into the Captain's cabin; this will be followed by the hot bullet of the sentry, in whom, unnoticed by Lieutenant Greve, raw hatred has been smouldering for years.

And that is what will happen when *all act together*.

Meanwhile the sentry faces the eternal firing squad, riveted to the flag of St. Andrew by the basilisk stare of the three long guns and the adhesive strength of thirteen hundred and fifty-three clauses of the Articles of War.

CHAPTER 4

Water streamed all over the ship.

Up on deck it lashed the turret armour and teak planks, spurting from the hoses like flashing whips. Below, on the mess decks, it spread over the linoleum of the decks and passageways, forming

puddles scummy with soda; it flowed in soapy rivulets over the paint of bulkheads, doors and lockers, gathering in gleaming iridescent drops on the rivetheads. Brooms and squeegees chased the water over wood, iron and linoleum into the scuppers, where it eddied round the openings in ceaseless whirlpools; water was mopped up with heavy squelching swabs, smelling strongly of tarred rope, and wrung out into buckets in muddy jets.

The battleship *Generalissimo* was having her Saturday toilet.

On the port side of the church deck the job was nearing completion. The paintwork had been washed, the folding tables and benches, stood up on end against the bulkheads, were already dry. The deck lino, rubbed dry, was shining under scores of lamps like the browned crust of a pie—with a dull, warm yellow lustre; the bare feet of the sailors left moist clear-etched footprints on it, which dried slowly. Petty Officer Belokon glanced at the footprints, scratched his shaven jaw with two fingers, and rattled off a round of quick-firing admonition, with emphasis on the ends of his sentences to hammer them home:

“Wipe your feet, wipe ’em dry, don’t dirty the lino! Gordeyev! Go over it again with the swab, wipe it dry, make it shine like the devil’s eyeball!”

Gordeyev, bent double, crawled back from the door crabwise, dragging a wrung-out swab, which he used with circular sweeping movements to wipe away the last wet traces. A dank smell rose from the swabs, the hot water, the steaming wood, the damp linoleum and the sailors’ sweat—a smell of cleanliness. All doors and hatches leading to the deck were battered down; the petty officers guarded their compartments rigidly and fiercely—what sort of scrub-round would it be with everyone shuttling backwards and forwards! Like as not they’d drag their swabs along from the next compartment, too—and swabs drip! So Belokon had started the clean-up job by sticking a broom handle through the door-bolt.

The ear-nuts on the watertight door leading from the adjoining compartment rattled and turned one after the other—someone was trying to open the door from the other side. Belokon looked slyly at the broom handle—they could pull till doomsday! But the handle began to crack: strong hands were tugging at the door. He could dish out a string of unmentionables to shoo the fellow away, but he had done that once through the door when the Commander himself happened to be behind it. He didn’t like to think of it. The door rattled still more violently.

“Open the door!”

To be on the safe side, Belokon removed the broom handle and opened the door slightly. Behind it stood a crowd of stokers. Their boots were covered with coal dust and their work blues were sweat-sodden and grimy—the black gang out of hell! The lino had been washed specially for them! It was that clean, you could send a white cap spinning over it like a curling stone on the ice, cap-cover downwards, without soiling it.

Belokon jerked the door towards him.

“Go to hell, you’ll foul the place up!”

“But we’ve just come off watch, let us pass, please.”

“We’ll be careful.”

“We’re going to have a wash, sir.”

“I’ll give you a wash! Shoo off! Go back to the stokehold before I take your names!”

“We can’t go back to the stokehold, sir, we’ve just been relieved.”

“None o’ your lip! Take your hand away, or I’ll bang it off for you!”

Petty Officer Belokon slammed the door and slipped the broom handle back into the bolt. The lino was clean, fresh and shiny—it did your heart good to look at it.

“Of all the bloody bastards!” said the foremost stoker as he gave another hopeless tug at the door. “What are we going to do about it?”

“Go back to the stokehold—didn’t you hear him? Where else can we go in dirty rig?” answered another, scratching his chest. His skin was hot and itching, its pores choked with coal dust during the long watch, and the showers were a long way off on the fo’c’sle; there were five more bulkhead doors to it, like this one, each guarded by a petty officer.

“He ought to be kicked down there himself, the bastard! Does he expect us to stand a second watch?”

“Gangway there, boys!” a ringing young voice sounded gaily behind them.

The stokers looked round. From the stokehold hatchway appeared a snub-nosed boyish face under a grimy officer’s cap, caked, like their own, with coal and sweat. The men fell back, and Engineer Sub-Lieutenant Morozov sprang lightly from the hatchway and made his way through the blue-clad throng, smiling and joking. His four hours’ tiring watch was over. Now he could wash from head to foot and clear his throat with hot strong tea and lemon. He poked a finger playfully into the stomach of a burly stoker with a dirty red skin-wound on his cheek.

"Running to fat, Ezofatov. Time you got married. Who decorated your face like that?"

"I stumbled in the bunker, sir," Ezofatov muttered, putting his hand to his cheek. The men laughed.

"Tried to use his jib as a coal shovel, sir!"

"He ought to have his head examined!"

The sub-lieutenant frowned.

"Why didn't you tell me before? I'd have put you on the excused list. Don't touch it with your dirty fingers. Go and see the Sick Berth P.O. when you've washed. Does it hurt?"

"It'll be all right, sir, just a scratch," Ezofatov said, smiling down at the young sub-lieutenant.

He was a good man, was Engineer Sub-Lieutenant Morozov, and a simple and kindly soul too. Treated the men fairly.

"Now don't forget to go to the sick-bay," Morozov repeated, as, smiling, he looked at the men and tried the hatchway door. "What are you all hanging about for? Lost your way? Off you go to the baths, you sons-o'-guns!"

"They won't let us through, sir. Cleaning ship."

"They're sending us back to the stokehold."

"They're washing everywhere. You can't get through."

"I'm afraid you're stuck, my lads," Morozov said sympathetically, rattling the door impatiently. It was opened slightly. Belokon peeped through it, then flung it wide open.

Morozov, with pursed lips, looked at the shiny linoleum, then raised his eyes to Belokon's face with a guilty air.

"I'll be careful, I won't leave any marks," he said.

"That's all right, sir," Belokon said with ill grace as he slammed the door to after the sub-lieutenant had passed through it.

Taking big strides, Morozov tiptoed to his cabin, leaving black smudges on the linoleum. The engineers' cabins, except the Chief's, which was situated near the wardroom in "Officers' Country", were located in "Warm Lane"—a hot transverse passage connecting the starboard and port decks. In the days of auxiliary steam, the engineers formed a special corps of officers without naval rank; and although they had been rechristened several years ago—lieutenants and colonels becoming naval sub-lieutenants and captains—the red piping on the sleeve still stressed the distinction between the real naval officer and the engineer. A naval officer's uniform was in the imperial colours—black and gold only. The narrow red piping told a lot to the discerning—told that the Engineering College accepted any Tom, Dick or Harry from the lower middle classes and the com-

moners; that an engineer, when all was said and done, was a cross between an engine driver and a chauffeur; and that an engineer would never command a ship as long as he lived. It was for these reasons, perhaps, that Petty Officer Belokon, while submitting to authority and allowing Sub-Lieutenant Morozov to cross the clean linoleum, contrived nevertheless to pack the utmost contempt into the terse command:

“Gordeyev! Wipe up after him!”

Meanwhile the locked-out stokers were having a brief exchange with Chief Petty Officer Seryozhin, who had come with a cleaning-party to do the compartment, which, having the only open hatchway amidships leading to the upper deck, was usually dealt with last. Seryozhin had tumbled down flushed with cheerful zeal, and seeing the blue-clad crowd, flung out curtly:

“Shoo off! Every man Jack of you!”

“We can’t sir! They won’t let us through!”

Seryozhin gave a meaning nod towards the hatchway.

“What, in our work blues, sir?”

This gave Seryozhin pause. It was forbidden to appear on deck in work blues. You could only wear white on deck with the jumper collars out. Seryozhin glanced about him—behind the door of the church deck was Belokon. Aft were the officers’ quarters. Behind the stokehold hatchway was the Watch Engineer. But damn it all, the compartment had to be cleaned! He looked up at the hatchway. If they made a dash for it, who would see them? They hadn’t finished swabbing down the decks yet, so there would be no dirty marks. The Officer of the Day was on the quarterdeck, there were no officers up there now. Water was all over the place, squirting from hoses, and from the harbour no one would see them if they made it on the double-quick!

“Run through the upper deck, the hatchway under the fore turret is open. But run like mad! Scoot!”

Thirty-two stokers scrambled up the hatchway one after another and dashed towards the fo’c’sle along the portside, dodging the hoses and jumping over puddles. Able Scaman Prokhorov, in a playful mood, aimed a stream of water at their legs from behind the third turret. The dungarees clung to their legs, and the cold water gave them a pleasant foretaste of the baths.

“Hi, the black gang are loose!”

The stokers swore back cheerfully as they ran, exhilarated by the cold water, the sunshine, the race down the spacious deck, the fresh air and the dazzling blue of the harbour, which hurt their eyes after

the hot gloom of the stokehold. Ezofatov thumped Afonin on the back as they ran in a fit of high animal spirits.

"Stop scrubbing decks! Man ship!"

The command rang out from the distant poop, but it was instantly passed down the deck by the petty officers in charge of the cleaning. The command was a loud and imperious one, requiring that all swabs and squeegees be dropped, all movement on deck cease, and the men line up at the ship's side for five long minutes. It slammed down on the running stokers like a fly net, catching them exactly half-way between the open hatches. Some of them stopped irresolutely, the rest bumped into them and pushed them forward.

"Scram, or we'll get it in the neck!"

The thirty-two stokers dashed forward.

The men in blue ran on past the figures in white, who had already lined up by the taffrail. The sun, the blue harbour and the open air were no more; all that existed was the square hole of the fore turret hatchway, the only avenue of escape.

"Stop! Where are you galloping, like colts? Line up at the side!"

This was Boatswain Netoporchuk, who suddenly appeared in their path. He even threw his arms out, like a man trying to stop a runaway horse. The stokers huddled together again, bumping into each other.

"We're making for the hatchway, sir!"

"Didn't you hear the order? You can't run about now. Stand there!"

The stokers formed a blue line against the taffrail facing inboard. Thousands of sailors and hundreds of officers were already standing like that at Helsingfors, Libau, Kronstadt, Revel, in the Gulfs of Finland, Riga and Bothnia, in battleships and destroyers, in gunboats and mine-layers, in transports, mine-sweepers, and patrol-vessels, and in the black-and-gold Imperial yacht—standing motionless and silent, looking straight before them.

Every morning the Russian Imperial Navy becomes wrapped in reverent silence. The silence is so profound that one can hear the water dripping into the scuppers from the interrupted or completed deck cleaning. Boats in the roadstead, sighting the signal, lie on the oars, which hang poised over the water like the wings of queer big birds. So profound is the silence hanging over the harbour that one can hear the tinkle of the large silvery drops as they drip off the white smooth oar blades into the glassy water. So profound is the silence hanging over the Baltic that the ships at sea, cruising unseen, can be heard by the roar of their screws churning the water.

Centuries have passed over the Russian Imperial Navy with their ponderous tread of naval service, leaving their indelible marks on every ship of the fleet. We find them in the clear-etched spirals of boat falls neatly arranged on the decks in coils by the davits just as they were a hundred years ago. Centuries are moulded into the cast-iron immobility of the sentry at the flagstaff. Centuries are laced into the cunning braid of the toggles to which the signalmen have already fastened the St. Andrew's ensign. And the ensign itself, still cradled in the left elbows of the signalmen on all the ships a minute before the hoisting of the colours, has in it the flavour of the centuries. Every day for two hundred years the flag has been creeping up the polished wood of the flagstaff, where, hoisted close up to its place, it comes to a quivering stop—if the sea is calm, or flutters tremulously, its blue saltire poised over the fleet—if there is a fresh breeze and whitecaps on the sea.

"We're in for it now, blast 'em!" Ezofatov whispered.

"Why? They chased us up here themselves," his neighbour whispered back.

Petty Officer Khlebnikov, who, in his haste, had posted himself in a puddle at the side of the blue-clad file, hissed at them from the left flank:

"Pipe down!"

For two hundred years the flag has been honoured like the colours of a regiment, and the whole ship's company have to guard it to their last breath. At anchor it is guarded by a special sentry, and when under way and in action, when the ensign is flown day and night from both the masts and the gaff, it is guarded by a reliable petty officer, who will allow no one to touch it without the personal order of the Captain. If the flag is shot down, it is instantly replaced, lest the enemy should think for a moment that the ship has struck her colours. How can this flag, then, be hoisted without special ceremony, without all work, all loud commands and all movement aboard the ship being stopped when the two-hundred-year-old flag makes ready to unfurl its blue cross over the ships of the Imperial Navy?

And so, at five minutes to eight the signal QI is hoisted to half-mast, signifying that in five minutes' time the flag will be raised Without Guard and Band.

There was no special ceremony that morning either. It was the usual daily ritual. The guard ran up on deck, the officers hastened to the quarterdeck and formed a long line on the starboard side, the buglers lined up beside the guard, and all the men on deck

dropped what they were doing and mustered at the ship's side facing inboard.

The Commander stepped briskly from the forecastle. Glancing at the blue file of the stokers as he strode past, he raised his eyebrows, and said to one of the petty officers standing near him:

"Khlebnikov! Take their names!"

Thirty-two stokers in blue work rig made an ugly blot on the upper deck, and the Commander could not go into the details of this breach of discipline. He hurried on to reach the quarterdeck before the Captain got there. Khlebnikov stepped out in front of the file, opened his notebook and got out a pencil stub. Every stoker wore his number on the pocket of his work clothes. A row of men along the taffrail, a row of numbers in the notebook—thirty-two men, thirty-two numbers. Passing through the notebooks of the stoker petty officers, these numbers would be replaced by names, and every one of the thirty-two stokers would receive an equal number of hours' sentry-duty. He wrote in silence, and as silently the stokers smoothed out the folds of their pockets to show the numbers clearly.

Talking was prohibited. The silence deepened over the ship and the harbour. Far out on the poop the Captain had already appeared, and with the command "Attention!" life on deck ceased completely. And when the silence became a deathly hush, the signal on the flagship, which had been raised to half-mast, was close-hoisted to the yard, and the command rang out in every ship, in every harbour:

"To the flag and jack. Attention!"

The command was long-drawn-out, and there was an uplift in the voices of the Officers of the Day, which rolled over the water and died away into silence.

Yuri Livitin stood on the left flank of the line of officers, stiff at attention. "Colours" had always seemed to him a beautiful ritual of profound significance, but today the majesty of those hushed minutes impressed him more than ever. This was the first time he was honouring the flag in a real man-of-war; the first time he had seen it hoisted here, among the officers, of whose family he would become a full-fledged member in three years' time. He experienced that sense of solemn elation which possessed him at parades in the dining-hall of the Naval College, when the ancient flag of the school appeared over the picture gallery to the strains of a slow march. That flag was greeted with music, but the St. Andrew's ensign with silence.

It was very long, that minute of morning silence, the only minute when the Navy's men could turn their thoughts inwards. After that

the ship's day would start, crammed with naval duties; it would rumble through its scheduled hours, filling hearts and minds, and towards the evening fling the spent bodies into hammocks to cap the day with sleep—the only thing left to them.

Yuri knew that there were no meaningless traditions in the Navy. There was rhyme and reason in it all. This minute of silence at the dawn of the naval day had been arranged two hundred years ago, and there was a deep meaning in it. When the ship is on the high seas; when not even a foreign shore is in sight; when the day rises from beyond the ocean, strange, hostile and treacherous; when the ocean is so vast that the villages, country homes and towns of one's native land with all that is dearest in them are screened by the bulge of the earth—then this minute is given up wholly and reverently to one's self, to God and family. The intense silence unlocks the simple hearts of the sailors. Men remember their near ones, and without word or prayer (even somewhat bashfully) turn to God, for the perils of the sea are manifold. He who has never been to sea has never prayed! Chastened by this minute of concentration, at peace with one another, the men begin their day, prepared for the eternal conflict with the elements.

Yuri, eyes shining with emotion, surveyed the guard. The picture of the men's rapt faces and the barely controlled features of Lieutenant Greve, who had been relieved of his watch, burned itself into his mind. The turret blocked his view, but he guessed that even now, in 1914, a thousand odd sailors and forty officers of the battleship *Generalissimo* were sunk in reverent thoughts.

And so they were.

The silence aboard was intense and concentrated. Silent was the man at the bell, as he stood grasping the cunningly plaited bellrope, roved through the clapper—at eight o'clock he must give four double strokes. The clock over his head, a round nautical clock with a peak to protect it from the rain and a lamp to illumine it at night, showed half a minute past eight. But that meant nothing, the bell would be struck exactly at eight, the Admiral knew better what the right time was. The quartermaster stood silent, looking, not at the clock, which showed the ship's time, but at the lips of the Officer of the Day. He, too, waited silently, not trusting the signalmen, his gaze fixed on the Admiral's signal; he had to look out for the moment when it detached itself from the yardarm and slid down—the idea of raising the signal is that all the ships in the harbour may act simultaneously. Silent, too, was the guard on the quarterdeck, silent the boat-keepers, standing at the booms, silent the oarsmen of the motionless

boats in harbour, silent the thirty-two stokers on the portside, caught by the signal on the upper deck, silent the straight white line of the officers. And silent, too, the Captain—the only man who had the right to choose his place on deck when the flag was being hoisted. His long reddish moustache was still morn-fresh and had not grown limp yet. At this moustache the sub-lieutenant standing third on the left flank was staring, chubby-faced and sleepy-eyed like a drowsy child. He stared with silent intensity. Would the Old Man cough up or not? It was an awkward thing to hand in a report about, but he couldn't kill him for it. . . . The ginger old miser, he'd grudge him the two hundred rubles. It wasn't his money, anyway. It was the ship's paint allowance, just lying idle. What lie should he tell? That he needed the money for his sister's operation? To buy warm clothes? Damn it, he should have known better than to play cards with Ryazanov. The fellow had the devil's own luck.

The Captain made a half-turn—he could pace the deck, if he liked, when everybody else stood silent and motionless. He was the only one of the ship's company who could do it, he who, after God and the Tsar, was the supreme being aboard the vessel entrusted to his care. He was absolute monarch in this kingdom of steel, guns and men. He could hang any sailor, and perform the funeral service over him in the absence of a priest, and he could even walk the upper deck during this minute of silence. But he had no need to—the officers' reports had been received, all was correct in magazines, turrets and engines, the chronometers were wound up, forty-five fathoms of anchor cable were paid out, eight men in sick-bay, seven defaulters. The Captain turned his head towards the portside, his glance followed anxious-eyed by the Commander—would he spot them or not? Turret—pinnaces—men—taffrails, then back again—men—pinnaces—turret. He must have missed them. Definitely. The turret was in the way! If he had spotted them he'd be tugging at his moustache, Old Whiskers—the stoker's blues could be seen a mile off. He should have sent them below at once, he wouldn't have to stand now worrying. What if the Captain took a step or two to his left? He'd be sure to see them then, and there'd be a week of nagging. "I'm surprised, sir . . . such negligence . . . it isn't a ship, it's a brothel . . . it isn't a deck, it's a marketplace." He could rub it in, the old fungus. A regular driver, he was. Serving under him was the devil to pay. I wish this executive slavery was over and I'd be given a destroyer of my own, the Commander thought. I won't get a decent destroyer for at least another year, though. I could ask Mother to pull some strings at St. Petersburg. They might put me off with a

numbered destroyer, damn it! And this ginger old foggy doesn't look like retiring. I'll have to stick it.

The stokers could not be seen from aft, nor could they see the quarterdeck with the officers on it. They stood silent, like everybody else on deck, and outwardly calm. The straight blue-clad line was reflected in a large gleaming puddle. The water in it quivered with a faint continuous ripple, as if coming to the boil (the ventilator motor was just below), and the blue figures reflected in it seemed to be trembling with a nervous shiver. A faint ripple ran down the blue line of men, passing from mouth to mouth in a barely audible whisper. "*Complaint*". Given life by no one knows whom, the word excites, perturbs, fastens upon the mind, holding out a shadowy promise of justice. Why should they be punished when they were *ordered* to run along the deck? And again, from somewhere in the middle of the line, a faint nervous ripple runs out in two directions carrying a new phrase, rallying the faint-hearted: "Don't dismiss . . . we'll see the Captain . . . it isn't fair." On it runs, stuck for a moment in throats suddenly parched with fear, checked on lips that dare not pass on the dangerous slogan, until the man's neighbour prods him with a big heavy fist, muttering "funking?"—and it pursues its course, trickling through gaps between blue shoulders like pitch between the planks of the ship's decks—the binding substance of solidarity.

The Captain's gaze was fixed intently on the after turret, and it seemed to the Commander that the Captain, like a sporting-dog, sensed something wrong behind it. Could it be the paintwork? Quite a big bit of it was chipped off the armour, and paint to the Captain was holier than holy. Still, better the paint than the stokers! But paint was the last thing the Captain was thinking of. It looked as if no action would be taken on the application he had handed in once more yesterday. Again he would have to stifle that agonised yearning for a shore billet, for the little house and garden, offering escape from this deadening routine, this regal isolation, the venomous pinpricks of the Admiral, and the thousand depersonalised and dangerous men who added their crushing weight to that of the ship's steel and armour. The Captain turned his eyes away sharply and brought them sternly to rest on the man standing at the extreme left in the front rank of the guard. The Commander's eyes instantly followed suit and raked the sailor from head to toe. Old Whiskers had got out of bed the wrong side again. He was obviously trying to find fault. True, the sailor's mug was idiotic, but he couldn't help that! Otherwise he was all right—clean shaven, cap at the proper angle,

cars clean, harness shined up, stood stiff as a poker, only his right arm looked a bit tensed—what the dickens was the Captain scowling at?

The man's arm was indeed strained, and the sweat thickened under his armpits—in a moment he would have to present arms, but his fingers had taken an awkward grip on the rifle stock. They had to be shifted to make it handier for him to bring his rifle up straight without wobbling the bayonet, but it was too late now, worse luck! The sailor watched the Captain out of the corner of his eye, but he stared in front of him, his eyes fixed unblinkingly on the third button of Lieutenant Buturlin's tunic. The lieutenant, who stood facing him in the file of officers, was a tall handsome man, and the pink skin of his neck over the tunic collar seemed to diffuse fragrance. Immaculate and fresh, with trimmed moustache, his lips curled in the supercilious grimace of a man well aware of his own charms. The lieutenant, like the rest, was silent, and his eyes, grave, thoughtful and rather wistful, were remote and inward-looking. Could it be Lily? There was no one else. Nonsense—a doctor's wife, a respectable woman. . . . On the other hand, during the last fortnight there had been no other woman as far as he could remember. Could it have been last Thursday at Fenia's? It had been a hell of a mix-up, lots of army fellows, heavy drinking. But he had been in a hurry to go to Lily—it was her husband's night at the hospital—and he would hardly have forgotten his usual aversion to casual acquaintances. If it was Lily, though, it was disgusting. A married woman too! But they say, if your luck's out, you can catch it from your own sister. Rotten luck. I'll have to go and see a doctor, like a schoolboy. . . .

“Colours, sir!”

The urgent cry of the signalman rudely broke the minute's silence given over to reverent thoughts. Hearts cleansed and uplifted by this minute of concentration, the men began their new day at peace with one another and imbued with good cheer and fresh faith in the mercy of the Lord. So, at least, thought the Dutch skippers, who introduced the ritualistic traditions of the sea into the Russian Navy. The Dutch skippers were somewhat sentimentally inclined, though.

Swiftly, silently, questioningly, the Officer of the Day turns to the Captain, the Captain gives assent by touching his cap—and the silence of the Russian Imperial Navy ends.

“Hoist the flag!”

Simultaneously the silence is shattered by the clang of the bell, the blare of bugles, specially chosen in nearly the same tone, the

thud of oars tossed up vertically over the boats, the whistles of all the petty officers, the flutter of cap ribbons as a thousand heads are bared, and the dry double click of rifles coming up to the "present"—one, two! The ensign creeps up the flagstaff with rippling folds. The bugles sound longest, but the whistles try to keep up with them, the petty officers growing red in the face. And then the tune set by the bugles and the air in the petty officers' lungs peter out. The flag reaches its place in silence.

It is a different kind of silence now, one filled with the hidden press of a new day of naval duties. The Captain puts on his cap and the officers follow suit. Lieutenant Greve starts the naval day.

"On caps! Fall out the guard! Easy! Carry on scrubbing decks!"

The bugles emitted a short shrill cry and the spellbound fleet sprang into sudden life. Caps flew on, the guard ordered arms, wheeled and disappeared at the double down the hatchways. Jets shot from the hoses and hissed along the deck where the brooms renewed their activity. The file of officers became a huddle. The boats lowered their oars into the rowlocks and swung them back for a long stroke to pick up speed. The ship's sides instantly became deserted, the men crawling about over the deck like so many white frogs, scrubbing the white planks with sand.

Only the blue file of stokers remained at the ship's side. Petty Officer Khlebnikov glanced at them once or twice, then strode up to the file of silent men.

"Dismiss! At the double! Didn't you hear the order?"

Silence. Then a chorus of voices exploding:

"It isn't right! What did you take our names for? Call the Chief Engineer, let him settle it! You make us run and then punish us for it!"

"Now then! Stop that shouting!"

Silence again.

"What d'yer mean, shouting in the ranks? Where the hell d'you think you are? Keep your mouths shut!"

Petty Officer Khlebnikov knew his job and knew his men, and could always keep control of them. But now he felt ill at ease. The stokers had kicked over the traces—he could tell that by their flashing eyes and the way they had started shouting. This was a case for the Commander, not the Chief Engineer. He'd better hurry! Now then:

"Shun!"

No use. They were already standing at attention.

"Left, turn!"

Some of the men stirred mechanically, but checked themselves. The file stood motionless, looking down at their feet.

"I see," Khlebnikov muttered, put out. "What's this? Mutiny? Asking for the convict gang?"

The stokers were silent. Khlebnikov ran his eye over the line. The men's faces were grave and excited, and all eyes were turned away, except those of 2nd Class Petty Officer Vailis, who looked straight at Khlebnikov. He was third from the left flank, a short, thickset man with calm blue eyes, clear as a child's, and with compressed mocking lips. A troublesome fellow, a sneer in every word he uttered; and the words were bookish, too, maybe because Russian was not his native tongue. The rest looked grim, some frightened and desperate, as if astonished at their own audacity. Plainly, they had taken the bit between their teeth.

"Very good!" Khlebnikov said, keeping his dignity. "I'll report this, you may be sure. You'll get it. . . ."

He strode off to the quarterdeck, leaving the line of stokers stubborn and motionless. The stokers felt themselves champions of the sailors' cause, asserting a right which the heroes of naval legend had always fought for. And they had chosen for this a form of protest as ancient as the St. Andrew's ensign—that of complaint in the ranks: "We shan't dismiss . . . we'll go to the Captain. . . . It isn't fair. . . ."

The water streaming along the deck was quite clean; the soap and sand had been washed off aft, and the deck planks were yellow; water was plentiful and could be used without end. But the flowing water splashed the sailors, who stood ready with their squeegees. Boatswain Netoporchuk stood by the after turret behind a sailor, who was holding the tightly pulsating hose in his hand. Hosing had to be done sensibly. The hissing spluttering jet sparkled in the sun.

"Play it under the turret! Under the turret! Hose the blast-sleeve down!"

The glittering jet darted at the turret, drenching the strip of canvas covering its base, but the boatswain instantly jerked the nozzle of the hose aside.

"You'll wet the officers, you fool!"

Lieutenant Greve and Lieutenant Buturlin, his relief, were standing talking by the after-turret. The jet pounded one and the same spot on the apron, and the canvas slapped, shook and turned black. The boatswain eyed the lieutenants with sullen diffidence—they showed no sign of going away and were holding up the work. You couldn't very well tell them.

Khlebnikov approached the officers, and drawing himself up, reported something, casting anxious glances at the quarterdeck. Greve frowned and went forward. Buturlin, his smile gone, followed him.

"Sorry, Buturlin, but this happened during my watch. If you don't mind, I'll settle it," Greve said firmly. Buturlin shrugged and readily stopped. Greve gave Khlebnikov's shoulder a gentle push as he walked along.

"Send the petty officers to me, quick! Every one that's on deck!"

Netoporchuk hesitated, glanced at Buturlin, then plucking up courage, went over to him and halted two paces in front of him.

"Excuse me, sir!"

"Well, what is it now?" the lieutenant said somewhat nervily.

"You may get wet. Will you please step aside, sir?"

Buturlin moved away, and the jet played over the apron, throwing up glittering fountains and rebounding from the armour in a heavy shower of spray. It poured over the sentry at the ladder, wetting rifle and cartridge-pouch. The sentry stood motionless. He could not move away.

And just as motionless, even solemn, at the ship's side stood the thirty-two stokers, who wished to see justice done. The hoses played all round them without splashing them—the very water seemed to shrink from their foredoomed bodies—leaving the deck at their feet covered with soap and sand. An invisible wall kept the spray off them, and no playful Prokhorov squirted refreshing jets over their legs. The thirty-two stokers had crossed the borderline, they were no longer men, nor mates, nor grimy members of the Black Gang. Here, this side of the line, was discipline, order, obedience. There, where the blue silent figures stood, was emptiness, obscurity, crime.

This borderline was emphasised by six or seven petty officers, whom Lieutenant Greve had prudently posted round the stokers with orders to keep the seamen away. The lieutenant himself stood in front of the file, nervously biting his lower lip, waiting for the Commander. He was in for a tremendous wiggling from that quarter for not being able to deal with a handful of obstinate sailors. He could have called out the guard, but that would have meant aggravating the situation. It had to happen on *his* watch! What rotten luck!

The Commander appeared suddenly from behind the turret, and although they had been expecting him, they all—stokers, petty officers and lieutenant—sprang to attention.

Swiftly, gloomily, the Commander passed down the line, scarcely

glancing at the faces, and stopped on the right flank. Karl Vailis gazed with calm blue eyes at the Commander's shaven cheeks. They were smooth and dry, touched with patches of colour. Vailis was short of stature: he raised his head to see the Commander's face, but the latter took this jerky movement of his head as a gesture of defiance. Khlebnikov had mentioned the man's name in his hasty report. The Commander appeared cool, and only Lieutenant Greve, standing behind him, sensed the coming storm: the long fingers of the Commander's right hand, hanging down the side of his white trousers, moved incessantly, rolling an invisible pellet between thumb and forefinger—a bad sign.

“Ringleaders, one pace forward march!”

This quietly. No sign of the storm yet.

The line stirred. Who were the ringleaders? They were all together in this, no one knew who had started it. The line was silent. The pellet was acquiring a hard resilience, and the fingers rolled it faster and faster, more and more nervily.

“It's you—you Lettish swab!”

This suddenly loud, like a shot fired pointblank. Vailis's head jerked. The shout was like a whiplash on tensed nerves.

“You put them up to this! I've heard about you! Reading books, eh? Inciting to mutiny? Corrupting the men?”

The Commander was an experienced man—you should never argue with a crowd, always single out one man. In this way you diverted the attention of the others. Besides, no crowd acts concertedly, there are always waverers in it and people who feel they have gone too far. Both should be given a loophole, an avenue of escape.

“One black sheep will mar a whole flock! I'll teach you to incite to mutiny! You tyke! One step forward!”

Vailis knew only too well what was coming. He would have his face bashed before the ranks, while all the others would stand by with downcast eyes. He dared not step out of the ranks, as this would isolate him from the others. He must stick with all the thirty-two, otherwise he was done for.

“I didn't put them up to it, sir,” he said without flinching. “You ask the men. We want—”

“Silence!”

The Commander made a mistake. You could hit a man ordered from the ranks, but you dare not touch him in a crowd, where he stands shoulder to shoulder with his fellows.

Vailis recoiled from the Commander's uplifted hand, and the whole line suddenly became articulate. Someone shouted:

"Hitting a man for nothing, the bullies!"

The Commander spun round and hurried away to the quarterdeck. Lieutenant Greve took half a step forward, slipped a hand into his hip-pocket, and slowly surveyed the excited faces. His face paled slightly, bringing out more sharply the black close-clipped moustache over his tightly compressed lips. This game had gone too far. It was now an exciting gamble.

Six paces. . . . Aim at the stomach—you were likely to miss the head. . . . The thing was to get the first man who rushed at you—and then the petty officers would dash forward.

But no one rushed at the lieutenant. The sailors stood motionless. All they wanted was a hearing. To get it they had chosen the only possible form of protest—not to dismiss until they had been heard out. None of them moved.

Regretfully, Lieutenant Greve took his hand out of his pocket. What a pity. The Commander had fled ignobly, and if anything had happened, Greve would have shown firmness and determination. Character and capacity are revealed during a crisis: sometimes a single minute of danger tells you more about a man than years of service. A pity. It would have been a sensation, and everyone would have learned the stuff Lieutenant Greve was made of. They would have forgotten that he had not been able to make the stokers dismiss. . . . Now there was nothing to be done. They weren't capable of acting, so let them cool their heels.

He turned slowly and sauntered down the line, throwing out to Khlebnikov in a clear crisp voice:

"Don't let anybody come near!"

Silence acts more strongly than shouting, and uncertainty is always frightening. He went off to the quarterdeck, leaving the blaze to burn itself out on the portside in a silent ring of petty officers. It smouldered there in the oppressive solitude of the thirty-two, smothered by a rising wave—a growing sense of frustration and disaster. For twenty more long minutes the figures in blue stood there with the unmopped puddle at their feet, a blot on the otherwise clean and orderly deck.

In those twenty minutes the Commander had three conversations, hasty and tense, as during a naval action. The first was with the Chief Engineer. Engineer Commander Unilovsky fully appreciated the situation. He felt a disagreeable sensation in the pit of his stomach, but picked up his cap with an air of decision.

"I'll have a try, of course. But if they threatened you, then"—he spread his hands—"me they'll simply throw overboard."

The Commander savagely stubbed out his cigarette.

"You're right, they don't like you. I'll report to the Captain."

This was the second conversation. The Captain sat at his table hunched in a deep chair, looking down intently at the Commander's left leg. The bottom of the trouser was splashed. He must have run away from the men without looking where he was going. The bungling fool! The Commander began to speak with indecent haste, cursing himself inwardly for his sudden volubility. The Captain learned that thirty-two stokers had refused to dismiss, and had successively defied the orders of a petty officer, the Officer of the Day and the Commander; that in trying to bring them to reason the Commander had all but been killed in the attempt; that the Chief Engineer had long considered this division unreliable and was afraid to face them; that the guard had not been called out for fear of working up feeling; that all possible measures had been taken, but the party refused to dismiss; therefore the Commander considered the situation very grave, and for that reason had decided to trouble the Captain.

The Captain slowly stroked his long reddish moustache. He had served as an officer twenty-six years, long enough to learn how to keep cool. Shiyarov had made a mountain of a molehill, the donkey, and now he was making excuses for his own helplessness. Anyway, if this was not a mutiny, it would have to be called a mutiny; it couldn't be regarded as a trifling matter, once it had been brought to the Captain's notice. The Captain was no errand boy to do what others had neglected doing, and if he was to take any action he must act so that no one could point a finger at his ship.

"First of all get them below," he said, rising.

Commander Shiyarov shrugged his shoulders.

The gesture brought from the Captain the acid remark: "When I was a Commander, I never asked the advice of my Captain. Which of the assistant engineers is most popular with the men? Send him to them. Don't let him threaten or irritate them. Let him promise that I'll go into the matter, but let him get them below immediately. There's to be no talk about mutiny either in the wardroom or on the lower deck—warn all the officers. Call a boat alongside for me, I'll go and see the Admiral. The enquiry must be completed today."

The Commander, hating himself and the Captain, left the cabin and stopped the first orderly he met.

"Send Sub-Lieutenant Morozov to me!"

This was the third conversation. Sub-Lieutenant Morozov, on hearing what was required of him, flushed with indignation. He had always suspected Shiyarov of being cowardly and mean, and now

he was sure of it. He wanted to use the men's trust in Morozov to deceive them. Sub-Lieutenant Morozov would have nothing to do with it. Thereupon Commander Shiyanov lit a fourth cigarette; three lay unfinished in the ash-tray.

"You will take them below, Morozov, or you'll be court-martialled," he said drily. "They're your men, and you've allowed this indoctrinated riffraff to breed in the ship. D'you realise how this can end if they're allowed to stand there and defy orders?"

"This is unfair, sir," Morozov began. "They were driven out—"

"What the devil are you, a student or an officer?" Shiyanov interrupted sharply. "What the hell has fairness got to do with it, when they nearly killed me! Either you do as you're told or you'll face the court-martial!"

Sub-Lieutenant Morozov was twenty-four—less than half a lifetime. The other half depended on his reply. The men were right, that much was clear. But it was equally clear that their doom was sealed. How could his refusal, however magnanimous, help them?

"Very well, sir," he said, and left the cabin.

During those twenty minutes deck cleaning had been completed. The water was flowing off, the hoses had gone limp and were being coiled up. The great pools on deck reflected masts, sky, the shining paintwork and the blue file of stokers standing in sand and soap on the only piece of deck where the cleaning had not been finished. The petty officers surrounding them were just as silent as they were, and outside that circle ship life continued its usual round.

From various parts of the deck rows of bare-footed seamen advanced on one another with rubber squeegees. Pressed hard on the planks, they sent the water splashing far ahead. This was done swiftly and simultaneously over the whole deck—the seamen were at it in large numbers, their backs bent, hands working deftly. The squeegees beat a tattoo on the deck like thick hail, and the puddles dried quickly as the water went overboard. When the staggered rows met, the deck behind them was merely damp, but not wet; the sun would soon dry it white, leaving moist yellow patches only in the shade.

Only one puddle remained, the one outside the circle of petty officers, like the borderline of a plague-infested area. Into it, at the end of twenty minutes, stepped Sub-Lieutenant Morozov, cheerful and genial as ever. He smiled to the stokers as if nothing had happened, and some of the strain went out of their faces.

"What have you fellows been up to?" he said. "Kicking up a fuss about nothing. I thought you knew better."

"May I explain, sir?" one of them said.

"Go ahead, Ezofatov."

"They're not right to punish us, sir," Ezofatov said earnestly. "One of 'em doesn't let you go through below, another chivvies you up on deck, and the bos'n doesn't let you run to the hatch. And we're punished for it. Won't you put a word in for us, sir?"

Sub-Lieutenant Morozov pursed his lips with an air of preoccupation.

"Why didn't you say so at once?"

"We wanted to, but the Commander wouldn't listen, sir. We've got no ringleaders here. We're not mutinying, are we? Just complaining, asking the officers to go into it."

"And this is the result," Morozov said. He looked thoughtful.

They all watched him anxiously, expectantly.

"Look here, my lads," he said with an air of decision. "Down you go below. You'll only make things worse by standing here. I'll report to the Commander, we'll give you a fair deal. Cheer up! Left turn!"

The stokers turned with alacrity. Morozov shouted gaily:

"Off to the showers—on the double!"

The file ran past him and disappeared into the fore hatchway. The smile left Morozov's face and he addressed Petty Officer Khlebnikov, saying wryly:

"Take the list to the Commander."

Khlebnikov leaned over towards him, and lowering his voice reported:

"They were shouting something about bullies, sir. Will you write it down, sir? I noticed who it was—that fellow with the bleeding face. The one who spoke to you afterwards."

"Khlebnikov," Morozov said in a low suppressed voice, and his jovial childlike face became pale and grownup. "Go to hell, Khlebnikov!—do you hear? Go to hell and stay there, before I bash your own face in for you. Get me?"

Khlebnikov did not get him. He stared after the retreating figure of the sub-lieutenant, then carefully tore a leaf out of his notebook and went to the Commander.

The file of petty officers broke up and the deck became deserted. The broad puddle, still neglected, mirrored the racing clouds. Then its surface became ruffled, long waves ran across it and the clouds disappeared as the squeegees, pressed hard to the deck planking, advanced from three sides. Swiftly and easily, the sailors sluiced it into the waterway and it gushed over its cemented bed into the scuppers. The deck was cleaned at last of all dirt and disorder.

The steady routine of ship life continued, marked off into minutes, divided into water-tight compartments. The hitch that had occurred amidships had no effect whatever on the smooth running of that great time-tested machine called the service. Some cogs had been thrown out of gear, but an experienced hand had run them in again at once, and the service went on, every stroke of its bell marking a wasted and jettisoned half-hour in the lives of twelve hundred men.

Yuri Livitin stood at the table in his brother's cabin in an awkward pose, thumbing through a French novel for spicy passages (the title had intrigued him the day before). There was a knock at the door. With a swift rehearsed movement, he tossed the book onto the shelf and turned round. In the doorway, cleft down the middle by a relentless hair parting and a row of gold buttons on his tunic, stood Sub-Lieutenant Gudkov.

"Lieutenant Livitin not here?" he drawled in a lisping voice. "Will you please tell him that I shall be engaged till lunch-time—Commander's orders."

Gudkov raised his thin eyebrows as far as they would go over his colourless eyes. This was meant to express deep significance.

"Very important commission. I've attended to company duties, the lieutenant needn't worry. Deck cleaning is finished, Belokon's busy wet-nursing, everything *all right*."

"Very good," Yuri said with a slight bow. Gudkov bowed, too, and Yuri bowed again expectantly—he thought the sub-lieutenant wanted to say something. But Gudkov suddenly assumed a portentous expression, and spreading his hands to indicate that further conversation was absolutely impossible, he disappeared. Yuri grinned and followed him out. He wanted to have a look at Belokon to appreciate his brother's choice.

A man-of-war, like a lady's watch, has never yet been brought to a stage of perfect working order*; therefore, work on deck was still going on everywhere. By the after funnel men were hanging the canvas hoses up to dry. Warrant Officer Ovseyets, head thrown back and thick neck reddening in the clasp of his tunic collar, watched the limp wet hoses being hoisted on the pulleys, their heavy brass nozzles swaying in the air. One of the men at the whip hoist jerked the tackle hard in his haste, and the empty hose, wriggling

* Quoted from an order of Admiral von Schantz, 1865.

in the air, struck the funnel with its brass tip. Ovseyets punched the sailor's back, and looked round hastily: the officers didn't allow this sort of thing, and as luck would have it, a midshipman happened to be passing by; he was sure to blow the gaff.

"Careful there, you lubber! Who told you to jerk it? You'll damage the thread before you know it!" he shouted, angry with himself for having looked round. "Two days' leave stopped . . . for rough handling of the hose! You've got it dripping now—take a squeegee!"

By the after superstructure Yuri saw Netoporchuk, and coloured deeply at the remembrance of the night before.

Netoporchuk stood amid the coils of a six-inch manila hawser, as if within the coils of a gigantic tawny boa-constrictor. The reel on which it was wound was damp and rusty—just as he thought. He examined them with the satisfied air of a doctor at a post-mortem, which confirms his diagnosis. Yuri, overcoming his embarrassment, hailed him.

"Bosun, where is Company 4 having its lessons?"

Netoporchuk looked round, and immediately drew himself up to attention.

"In Mess No. 18, I think. Tulmankov, show the young gentleman where the school is."

Tulmankov was a tall, thin seaman gunner with a pale convalescent-looking face. He sprang nimbly down from the hanging rope-ladder of the after turret and silently made for the hatchway. Yuri thought it awkward to walk side by side without speaking, and he asked, just for the sake of making conversation:

"Do you miss home here? What gubernia do you come from?"

"No gubernia—I'm from St. Petersburg. Why is it, sir, that a sailor is always asked what gubernia he hails from?" Tulmankov said it in an unexpectedly bland sarcastic tone. Yuri was taken aback—of all the nasty, cheeky fellows! He was at a loss for a retort (a midshipman is not a sailor's superior), and assumed a look of cold indifference, although tears of impotent anger were ready to spring to his eyes.

"This way, it's nearer," Tulmankov said, this time omitting the "sir" and pointing to a hatchway.

They found Belokon in Mess No. 18 standing before a half-circle of seated sailors with a sheet of paper in his hand. At the sound of footsteps he turned to Yuri a bright handsome face of that dashing naval style of beauty which draws from officers the admiring remark: "a jolly jack". Well-nourished, bronzed, turning swiftly on

a strong muscular neck, it showed dazzling teeth and glowing cheeks. The vivid lips under the thin black moustache seemed ready to respond with a gay smile to the playful greeting of a superior officer; his quick dark eyes, cunning and intelligent, looked at you boldly. Just what a real sailor should look like, not one of your gaw-gaws! Nikolai had not done so bad after all. In three years' time the man would make an excellent chief petty officer.

"Hullo, Belokon, don't let me interrupt you," Yuri said with some embarrassment. He simply couldn't manage that casually off-hand manner which enables a boy of eighteen to assert his authority with sailors who entered the service when he was playing with his toys.

"I've been ordered to lick these dunces into shape, sir, this being their free time," Belokon said, eyeing the sailors with contempt. "Bunch o' poor mutts, sort of defective ship's property. Sit down! We go on with the lesson."

He consulted his paper, lowered it, and passed his quick eye over the sailors.

"Remember this: the first duty of a sailor on shore duty in the Grand Duchy of Finland is the pacification of the population which runs afoul of the laws of the Russian Empire. That's about the size of it. Get me? Is that clear, Storozhuk?"

"Yessir!"

"In that case, maybe you can figure what the Finns are kicking against?"

"It's those senators, sir," the answer came pat.

"What senators? You fool. Gets hold of a word and thinks he's clever. Now then, let me explain. Listen, all of you. In 1809, by a manifesto of His Imperial Majesty Alexander the First, Finland was granted full and free right of self-government, includin' the right to issue laws by its senators, constitutin' a special body called the Diet. That's about the size of it. At the end of a hundred years the Finns were to become Russians on an equal footing with the other subject peoples. The trouble is that the hundred years o' grace allowed by the Emperor did not weaken the patritisms of the vanquished nation, and so the Finns, in defiance of the treaty, are demanding their parliment back again and they hate the Russians, 'specially the gallant Russian Navy. That's about the size of it. We'll brush up on that afterwards. And now let's see how you've done the last lesson."

He consulted his sheet of paper again and looked up.

"You chap from Pskov—tell me again, what was our Imperial Duma established for?"

A young seaman, about four years older than Yuri, wiped the instant perspiration from his brow with his open hand and blushed to the roots of his white-bleached hair.

Belokon shook his head ruefully.

"You don't know? How many times must I explain it? Just try and figure it out—what do the people need a Duma for? You can't, eh, you goof? Storozhuk, tell him."

Storozhuk jumped up, fixed his eye on the electric bulb, and rattled off:

"By command ovizimperial majesty the 'perial duma was established so's the best men elected from all over the country should help sperialmajesty to keep an eye on what was goin' on everywhere and if need be punish those who went against the law. That's all, sir."

"There! Did you hear that? That's the way to answer. Make him repeat it to you afterwards, Storozhuk. Now, Chernikh, tell me how many Dumas have we had and why were they dissolved?"

"There were three, sir, and now the fourth one's sitting," Chernikh began slowly and thoughtfully, helping himself along with movements of his thick gnarled fingers. "The first one was dissolved because its members were all rebels and bad 'uns, who were making trouble in Finland together with the Jews. The second one, because it was chockful o' traitors and assassins, who were out to kill the Tsar. And the third one because it had served its term, sir."

"Not bad. If only you wouldn't mumble, like you was milking a cow! Wake up, man! A sailor must be all there, quick on the uptake! Is this the stuff they make sailors of? Might as well try to make a bullet out o' dung! Come on, Kostrushkin, answer up lively—who stands to gain by a revolution in Russia?"

Kostrushkin, a lean, quick-eyed sailor, answered with a faint smile:

"A revolution is to the advantage of foreign states, who envy the power and might of the Russian Empire, sir."

"Good. And what will the consequences of the revolution be if the Army and the Navy let the rebels start one?"

"Famine, ruin and the conquest of Russia by her enemies, as law and order will be upset and there'll be no one to govern the country."

"Correct. But let's do without the grin. We can't have grinning at lessons."

"It's the third time you've asked me, sir," Kostrushkin said, still smiling. "I know what'll happen in case of a revolution, believe me, I do, sir. . . ."

"You do, do you? Clever dick. Sub-Lieutenant Gudkov told me to take special care with you."

"Let me see that, Belokon," Yuri suddenly said, reaching for the sheet of paper.

The thick notepaper contained questions and answers written in a neat unfamiliar hand:

"Q. Is there much land in Russia?"

"A. Very much, much more than the peasants need, but there are few intelligent people to work it, and that is why the yield is so small.

"Q. What will you do if anyone tries to tell you that our peasants haven't enough land?"

"A. Hit him in the jaw and hand him over to the authorities for a trouble-maker."

Yuri read no further, and went out smiling.

Back in the cabin, he found his brother over the washstand. The white soap suds were melting on his bared forearms, showing a coloured dragon tattooed during a foreign cruise, which moved its coils when his muscles rippled. Yuri gave an enthusiastic account of Belokon.

"I said you'd be grateful," the lieutenant said, vigorously drying the dragon with his towel.

Yuri suddenly laughed at some recollection.

"Tell me, what is Sub-Lieutenant Gudkov like?" he asked.

"He's my second. A driveling idiot, but as obedient as a performing poodle. There's a saying in the fleet that the *Generalissimo* has two rarities, among others, that it can boast of—the parquet in the Captain's cabin and a certain Sub-Lieutenant Gudkov. Why do you ask?"

"Funny subjects he chooses for the sailors' lessons. The Duma, revolution."

Nikolai, smiling, pressed his right hand to his chest and fished for the sleeve-link with the fingers of his left.

"Not funny at all. The blue collar has lately begun to take an interest in politics. Better that interest should be satisfied here on the ship than by some soap-box orator."

"They go about it in a primitive way here, makes you feel uncomfortable. Why don't you do something about it?"

"Thank you!" the lieutenant said with a bow. "I gave Gudkov the job because I wasn't fool enough to tackle it myself. Don't you understand, there are no half-tints in naval service—if it's black, it's pitch, if it's white, it's whiter than sails. The sailors must be told

what's what in clear terms, if we don't want to find ourselves back in 'twelve. I don't suppose they teach you midshipmen anything about the year 'twelve? Not eighteen twelve, but nineteen twelve."

"No. What is it?"

"This. One fine April night the jolly jack-tars arranged to cut the officers' throats on all the ships and start a revolution. Luckily, our wise authorities had white rats planted everywhere, otherwise I should have swung on the yardarm together with my fellow-officers."

"Tell me another one," Yuri said, incredulous.

Vague and unauthenticated rumours had reached the Naval College, hinting at disgraceful discoveries, such as a bale of illegal literature found in a coal-bunker, and "study circles" which had contacts ashore. All these rumours, however, had been forthwith scotched by first-hand accounts of how three sailors had quick-marched a student into the cabin of sub-lieutenant So-and-so (mentioning his name and relationship to the narrator), reporting: "This bloke, sir, tries to tell us you're selling Russia, and ought to be thrown overboard, so we've brought him down to do the throwing himself." Another successful story was that of the gallant conduct of a lieutenant off the *Tsesarevich* who killed a sailor on the spot with his dirk on the quay at Revel for having used foul language about the Tsarina, and his mates had refused to carry the body to the boat, saying: "To a cur—a cur's death." "Nineteen twelve? Impossible. Why, the revolution was over in nineteen-five.

The lieutenant smiled.

"Obviously, you midshipmen are being taught on Gudkov's pattern too. The students, you are told, are stirring up the people, and the sailors are all splendid fellows, eager to die for God, King and Country. These are not the days of sail, my boy. You can't put any illiterate Ivan in charge of an engine or a turret these days. As for the men who have had some schooling—and you have to take them into the Navy whether you like it or not—these have views of their own. They believe that the people who are to blame for all wars are the manufacturers and the officers, who simply hanker after a war. Ergo, the whole hateful brood must be wiped out unto the seventh generation, and then you will have the paradise on earth called socialism."

Yuri looked amused.

"Liberty Hall, in other words? But it isn't serious, surely."

"Not at your school, maybe. I tell you, we're living on a volcano. But then the Apostle Paul doesn't advise Christians to speak of such abominations. Politics are not for gentlemen. Leave

them for the gendarmes and Sub-Lieutenant Gudkov. Our job is to fight and die when ordered to. Let's go to the wardroom—I hear the grog whistle."

The pipe warbled cheerfully on the upper deck. On the fore-castle a bucket of vodka was brought out to the winding queue of waiting sailors. The Senior Storekeeper, solemn as a priest administering the sacrament, got out the list of drinkers and eyed the jostling seamen sternly.

"Now then, stand back there! You'll upset the bucket!"

He tarried, relishing his power over the eager crowd, then, after a pause, said quietly:

"Walk up. Give your name—louder!"

There was a hush as the sailors rolled their tongues, collecting saliva to take the stale taste out of their mouths—it was six hours since they had had breakfast. They stood close behind one another, shuffling their feet, jogging the man in front, or gazing at those who had downed their portion with a grunt and stepped aside, wiping their mouths with their hands and winking at the rest. The bucket held the crowd of sailors spellbound; it glittered in the sun, drawing to itself eyes, thoughts and desires. The sparkle of the sweetish, pungent, fiery liquid and the faint aroma that rose from it set stomach linings aquiver, raised a thrill, made spirits soar. Whereas the faces of the men at the end of the queue were still apathetic and sleepy-eyed, those standing near the bucket stared hungrily at every drinker as he threw his head back; the saliva now flowed freely, and they swallowed it with every glass that went down the other man's throat.

In the days of wooden ships this tot of vodka had a hygienic purpose. The perpetual dampness of the men's quarters, which were heated once a day with braziers, called for preventive measures against chills. Later, a disciplinary side was added to the hygienic; vodka became the antithesis of flogging, the reward of zeal: one glassful for smart rowing, and twenty strokes for slack. But when steam replaced sails, the tot lost its hygienic purpose, and with it, its stimulating aim; in the interests of the nation's sobriety it was no longer recommended as a reward for zeal, and joined the august company of naval traditions, upheld with more pride than reason.

As a matter of fact, by 1914 the tot had passed into the category of economic and political expediency. No vodka to a Russian spelt death; vodka accompanied him from the cradle to the grave; it gurgled throughout the length and breadth of the land; it was carried to the remotest corners of Russia, where church was not yet

and school would never be, but where already the green sign of the state liquor monopoly was fixed over a hut. Among the national budget items the government sale of liquor accounted for nearly one-third of all the revenue; the whole of Russia drank, ingurgitating and vomiting into the gutter every year nine hundred million rubles. Every soul, male and female, young and old (levelled down to a statistical unit sans age or sex), imbibed eleven bottles of vodka a year. Why then should this Russian soul, on assuming naval trappings, forfeit the national rights common to all Russian citizens? Such injustice might have caused discontent among the sailors, who were a troublesome lot at the best of times.

And so the government generously poured into every sailor during his five years' service, forty-eight gallons of government-distilled liquor, entailing an apparently unreasonable expense to the amount of a hundred and fifty rubles per man.

But only apparently.

Day in, day out, twice a day for five years, a nicely calculated portion of physical and psychological stimulant is injected into the sailor's stomach. It excites in him a sense of gratitude for the forethought behind it, which seems to say: "You've earned a drink, my lad, and God bless you!" Glass by glass, imperceptibly, the vodka works a slow change in him in the desired direction: vodka upsets proper metabolism, and the sailor's body puts on unhealthy fat, giving him that sleek, well-nourished appearance guaranteed to win the admiration of the tsar and foreigners abroad. Vodka slowly destroys the nervous system, impairs the memory and slows down the brain, which is all to the good, because it is bad for a sailor to use it. Like all narcotics, it becomes a necessity, and when the sailor takes his spell ashore, he makes a beeline for the nearest waterside pub, where he indemnifies the Treasury for the money it had so generously bestowed. At the same time this need for a drink safeguards the Navy against undesirable contacts ashore and against the wish to understand things a sailor should have no need to understand.

Finally, when, at the end of his term, a sailor returns to the village or the factory, the tot custom he has cultivated in the Navy makes him a powerful reinforcement to the miserable gallon-a-year consumers. He goes on drinking his gill a day—nine gallons a year. During the first five years of life ashore he refunds to the Treasury the hundred and fifty rubles spent on him (for the government netted a profit of nearly two rubles on each gallon it sold); in the years to come habit acquired in the Navy will yield a clear profit.

Thus, by shrewd statesmanship, peace and quiet is maintained in the Navy and a home market conquered without effort.

Vodka was not forced upon the sailor, however. He could get his grog allowance in money—a hundred and fifty rubles.

It was this money that Gunlayer Kobayakov, suppressing his craving for the forenoon “tot”, was counting on. He needed every ruble now: the whole village was wailing, the lawsuit with the landowner had been settled at last, and the court had ordered the commune to pay Zasetsky arrears of rent for the year when the field had still been a burn forest clearing. Kobayakov’s father wrote that his share amounted to a hundred and nine rubles. At a pinch, Kobayakov could save this sum up in a year, and his father was already complaining that he would have to sell the cow.

Every glass that was tossed back in front of him struck at the root of Kobayakov’s firm resolve not to drink, until he caught himself thinking that one glass could do no harm. After all, that letter could have come after dinner, and besides, it was only a matter of eight kopeks or so. The desire for a glass became clamorous. Kobayakov’s mouth watered, and he could distinctly feel the vodka dropping into his stomach in a warm little ball, leaving a fresh sweet taste in his mouth; he could feel his head lighten, disburdened of the nagging thoughts of home, father, rent and the hundred and nine rubles; he could feel an exhilarating vigour pouring into his tired body, and thought how nice that everlasting borshch would taste. The habit of three years had accustomed his stomach, feelings and brain to the reception of its seductive poisonous warmth. To disappoint these eager suppliants, deny them their customary titillation, seemed impossible. The result would be emptiness, frustration, nostalgia, the revolt of an organism defeated of hope.

Suddenly, Kobayakov’s eye caught the flash of a man’s cap-cover in front of him as he tossed his head back, and the smell of vodka struck his nostrils with compelling force. Before he knew it he was standing before the bucket. His heart contracted and his eyes looked bleak with the anguish of his resolve.

“Wake up! Forgotten your name?” the Storekeeper said, pencil hovering over his list, while the men behind prodded him in the back. Kobayakov touched his cap with an air of sudden resolution.

“Please cross me out, sir. I’d rather have the money. Kobayakov, Company 4,” he said, turning his head away from the tempting and exciting smell that rose from the proffered glass.

The Storekeeper threw him a look of withering scorn.

“Teetotalers! Pinchguts!” he said, scanning the list. “What’s

got into people these days! Figure you'll grow rich on grog money, eh? Stingy miser!"

The queue laughed. Kobyakov reddened, recollecting how he had himself jeered at those who did not drink.

"Doctor's orders, sir—bad for my inside," he muttered shamefacedly.

"Bad! A fat lot your doctor knows. Whoever heard of grog being bad for a sailor? So you're not having any, eh?"

"Cross out my name, sir," Kobyakov said in a jaded voice, as if he were taking leave of life.

"Get out of the way, you fowl! Don't stand there like a sister of mercy," an unsteady voice sounded behind, and a hand pushed Kobyakov aside. "Company 8, Ezofatov, sir. I'm not on the list. Please put my name down, I've started drinking again."

"What the hell—trying to bamboozle me!" the Storekeeper growled. "One chap chucks it, another starts again. You're a blasted nuisance!"

"I've got good reason," Ezofatov said defiantly, taking the glass. "Maybe it's my last drink, who knows. . . ."

The Storekeeper looked up from his list and eyed him suspiciously.

"Hold on! Haven't you had yours already? You sound too chatty. Here, let's smell your breath!"

Ezofatov quickly drained the glass and moved up, grinning.

"Certainly, take a whiff, sir. Nice and fresh!"

The men at the back laughed, and the Storekeeper flared up.

"I'll see you get sentry-duty, damn you! I'll report you!"

"I don't care now, report me as much as you like," Ezofatov said, adjusting his cap and moving away with a deliberate wiggle of his hips and arms. If you were smart enough and your petty-officer was not there, you could arrange with another man to drink his tot for him. There were as many as five hundred drinkers, and the Storekeeper could not possibly remember all the faces. Ezofatov drank for Venglovsky at the beginning of the queue and for Ezofatov at the end. He wanted to stifle the fear and resentment that had been born in Sub-Lieutenant Gudkov's cabin. Gudkov was collecting all evidence to prove a case of mutiny, and it was clear that they would be court-martialled. At first Vailis had laughed when Ezofatov, returning to the mess after being questioned, had banged the table with his fist and answered savagely to the stokers' questions.

"Sub-Lieutenant Morozov has done the dirty on us, God blast his damned soul! They'll settle it all right now, they'll see 'justice' done. We shouldn't have left the deck that time, damn it! What

could they have done to us, with the whole crew looking on—what, I ask you? And now we'll be court-martialled, one by one!"

"As if they've got time court-martialing men like you," Vailis had said, smiling. "You're a hothead, Ezofatov. If they're going to court-martial people for that, they'll have the whole Navy in prison soon."

But afterwards Vailis, too, had come back from his interview with Lieutenant Vetkin looking rather glum. He answered his mates' enquiries, however, in his usual calm way, in faulty Russian.

"They're talking through the neck, curse their grandmothers' hide! Making up a yarn that we've mutinied. Looks like they're going to talk to us about the weather in court."

From then until the grog whistle went, the men were summoned one by one, some to Lieutenant Vetkin, some to Sub-Lieutenant Gudkov. The enquiry, like coaling ship, was carried on in two batches. By dinner time it was practically over.

In the wardroom dinner was called lunch. The great messtable, made up in the form of the letter "U", was set with silver cutlery and decanters that sparkled in the sun on a tablecloth as white and stiff as the officers' tunics. Standing out against this in dark relief were the leather-backed chairs, the coat-of-arms on the chinaware, and a bottle of Malaga by the Commander's cover—he drank no vodka.

Yuri Livitin, covering up his embarrassment with a smile, intently examined the fishes in the aquarium. Father Feoktist, corpulent and florid, went up to him, toying with the cross that hung from a red moire ribbon edged with yellow. This ribbon, with the colours of the Order of St. Anne, was granted to officers for service in action and worn by them on their sword-knots, and to chaplains, who lacking a sword wore it with their pectoral crosses.

"Examining the fish, young man?" he said, and sighed, not waiting for Yuri's answer. "What a profound symbol, fishes, in a man-of-war. You and I will probably drown in the depths, but the fish will swim up. They'll be glad to be back in their native element, the rascals. . . ."

"Yes, and they won't need a life-belt either," one of the sub-lieutenants added maliciously.

"Don't be rude to your spiritual father," the Chaplain said, holding up a genial forefinger warningly. The officers laughed, and so did Yuri, although he did not see the joke. The wardroom talk, light

and flippant, was always interspersed with hints, cryptic words with a hidden meaning, as in a close-knit friendly family. How was Yuri to know that Father Feoktist stood in deadly fear of shipwreck, and on every cruise he put on under his cassock a lifebelt specially purchased abroad, thus providing ammunition for the sub-lieutenants' wit.

The Chaplain threw back the broad sleeves of his cassock, took a pinch of fish-seed in his left hand, and a glass of vodka in his right—the mess steward had placed it ready on a little tufa column—and tapped the glass tank with it. The fish, with a flick of their tail-fins, swam up and lay motionless in a semi-circle, their round expressionless eyes fixed on the vodka glass.

“Your health, gentlemen!” the Chaplain said as, dropping the seeds into the water and clinking his glass against the tank, he tossed off the vodka. The fish dashed at the seeds as they slowly sank, and Father Feoktist replaced his glass and put a tiny seed grain into his mouth by way of a snack.

“To every animal its food,” he said pontifically. “Those who dwell in the water need solid food, those who dwell on terra firma need liquid sustenance. Herein lies the harmony of nature.”

The Commander quickly entered the wardroom, taking in the table at a glance. The bewhiskered face of the mess steward disappeared into the pantry-hatch, the stewardsmen rushed to pull back the chairs, and the officers rose from their armchairs to take their seats at the table.

“Table, gentlemen!” Shiyanov said, taking his place in the middle of the table and bending his head. Father Feoktist made a hasty sign of the cross over the table (his place being opposite the Commander, the blessing was visited upon the bottle of Malaga), and with the same gesture picked up his napkin and tucked it into the collar of his cassock, covering his whole chest.

The officers sat down. White tunic sleeves flashed over the table in a simultaneous practised movement as hands, bent at the wrist, struck at protruding cuff corners with two fingers, then, just as simultaneously, drew the napkins from the rings and tossed them across their knees; after this the officers ceased to act in concert, reaching for decanters, bread and hors-d'oeuvres.

Yuri had learned a thing or two at yesterday's dinner. He laid his napkin across his knees (only the Chaplain made a bib of it) and took his bearings undismayed among the varied assortment of cutlery and hors-d'oeuvres before him. Yesterday he had blushed and declined the hors-d'oeuvres. The democratic training of the

Naval College had not taught table manners, and at home the meals were good but simple.

"Here's to our guest, welcome!" Lieutenant Greve said, raising his glass. "Ska-al!"

Yuri "halved" his glass: this was another observation he had made yesterday. Every ship had her own style of vodka-drinking, and one could tell what ship the drinker came from: in the *Generalissimo* they downed a glass in two draughts; in the *Tsesarevich* they drank it like liqueur, sipping it slowly through the teeth without throwing the head back; in destroyers, on the other hand, they knocked it back in exaggerated rough-sea-dog fashion, after which they let out a gasping "hah!" and added, turning to their neighbours with a grimace: "Horrible stuff, keep away from it!" They took their snacks differently too: in the cruisers, instantaneously, in the battle-ships, leisurely, and in the destroyers it went down with a sniff at a crust of bread.

A subdued hum of conversation hung over the table, boyishly gay at the sub-lieutenants' end, composedly witty at the lieutenants', and sedate in the middle, where Shiyonov sat, flanked or faced by the senior artificers, the Surgeon and the Chaplain. The conversation rolled back and forth across the table like an airy shining ball, tossed high by gusts of laughter, sinking when the courses were changed, lingering briefly at one end of the table to be driven to the other by a well-aimed repartee. Yuri took practically no part in it. Smiling and turning his head, he followed the flight of the shining ball, which mirrored a variety of simultaneous things.

Spinning and rolling across the table, it suddenly showed an Algerian saloon bar where the Navigator's black beard had earned him the title of Sheikh. With a gleam of Admiral's epaulets on the shoulders of the recently promoted former Captain of the *Generalissimo*, the ball mirrored the deep blue waters of the Indian Ocean (the Chaplain was reminiscing on the Second Squadron's cruise), then all at once the waters fell back, revealing the shapely legs of a visiting Swedish ballerina, who gave performances in Helsingfors. Then, scintillating, came a shower of gold pieces, her monthly upkeep, defrayed by Stockman, owner of a large store, which was eclipsed by lengths of blue diagonal cloth as the officers discussed where the best material for tunics could be bought—at Stockman's or in St. Petersburg. The cloth was torn aside by Lieutenant Budagov's bulldog, Lady, who appeared with a pencil in her teeth—she had wreaked her vengeance on her master for a recent whipping by chewing up all the pencils on his desk.

"What a brute you are! Poor Lady!"

"You needn't pity her, gentlemen. She ruined the breed for me—went and had an affair with that shaggy tyke Pirate under a turret. The watchman didn't keep an eye on her, the clod! And I promised Madame Beklemisheva the first pup!"

The ball shot upwards in an eddy of laughter and flew over to the sub-lieutenants, where the subject of dogs was played up. The lieutenants got busy with the fish. Greve replenished Yuri's glass for the third time.

"I think you've had enough, Yuri," Nikolai said with a slight frown.

"Nonsense," Yuri answered airily.

A sailor must be able to hold his liquor, and although Yuri's head was dizzy, he halved his glass and set it down proudly, surveying the company with smiling adoration. The snub-nosed young sub-lieutenant at the bottom of the table looked pale and sullen; he was obviously drunk. These young sub-lieutenants, they couldn't hold their liquor, Yuri thought wryly.

"Who is that over there?" he asked his brother quietly with a motion of his eyes.

Livitin followed his glance.

"Engineer Sub-Lieutenant Morozov—why?"

"Looks like a dying duck. Is he in love?"

"I don't know. Ahoy there, Morozov! What are you sulking for, old chap?"

Morozov raised his eyes—they were already dull and glassy—and reached for the decanter. But the Commander must have noticed him before Yuri; he winked to the messmen, and a cotton-gloved hand whisked the decanter away (the sub-lieutenants' vodka was removed when the Commander found that they had had enough; these sub-lieutenants were too young to learn temperance).

"It's mean and disgusting!" Morozov said, turning his head towards Livitin and groping about for the decanter. "There are too many scoundrels about. It's a shame!"

The words rang out clearly across the table. Shiyanov stopped smiling and threw a cold glance at Morozov.

"That's your private business, Morozov! You can hardly expect the wardroom to be interested in such revelations. A man of the world should be able to conceal his feelings."

"I saw a man of the world, sir, who just couldn't conceal the fact that he was a coward and a scoundrel," Morozov said in an unexpectedly clear clipped tone, his face paling.

"You've probably discovered that in one glass too many," Shiyanov said very quietly, though his cheek twitched slightly. "Gentlemen, please calm your friend down," he added, addressing the group of sub-lieutenants. "Remind him that he is in the wardroom and that our young guest may form a wrong opinion of it."

He turned to the Gunnery Lieutenant and resumed his conversation. There was an awkward pause in the general talk, and an effort was required to start the ball rolling again.

A callboy from the watch appeared in the doorway, and one of the messmen hurried forward to meet him—sailors were not allowed in the wardroom. A sailor could be there in two events: if he were wounded in action (the wardroom is then turned into a dressing-station), or if he became a messman. In both cases, however, he was either a casualty or a servant rather than a sailor.

"Attention, please, gentlemen!" Shiyanov said, on reading the signal pad which the messenger had brought. The talk died down. "We are ordered to sea at 4 p.m. Target practice. Officers please get your stations ready immediately. If any of you have business to attend to, you may leave the table without asking permission."

Several officers got up, Morozov among them. He made for the door unsteadily. He would have to pull himself together at once—a nap, a shower bath, a bottle of soda water and strong tea. Sailing orders! He must get ready for sea whatever his feelings were.

The piano struck up a rollicking ragtime tune. Lieutenant Vetkin turned, and seeing Greve at the piano, he went over and sat on the arm of his chair.

"How's the enquiry?" Greve asked in a low voice as he hammered out the syncopated rhythm with nimble fingers.

"You're in for it, old chap. Shiyanov's wild because you couldn't get them to dismiss. He's throwing the whole blame onto you."

Greve flushed. "The swine. He did a bunk himself."

"He says they threatened him."

"He's a bloody liar! He made that up to protect himself. Who saw it?"

"The petty officers. Gudkov questioned them."

"They'll see what you tell them to see. He funk'd, and now he's trying to make excuses."

"I'm afraid you'll be put on the grill."

"Oh, all right. It's mean of him to throw the blame on me, though. But what could I do? Bawl 'em out?"

"If mutiny is proved, then it'll be clear you couldn't do anything," Vetkin said.

Greve switched over to the slow solemnities of Grieg.

"But will it be proved?" he said musingly.

"The matelots won't admit it, of course. They say, one and all, that no one threatened him. Did *you* see anything?"

"The devil knows," Greve said uncertainly. "I saw him recoil and run off like a hare."

"Shiyanov will try his damndest now to prove they were going to hit him. He went for me baldheaded because the enquiry did not bring this out. It shows him up! Just before lunch he and Unilovsky were making wild guesses who could have raised his hand against him. The tea leaves told them it was Vailis. The most unreliable of the lot, although he's a petty officer."

They fell silent—the Chaplain had lowered himself into an armchair by the piano. Greve belaboured the keyboard, from which he produced melancholy chords. The sounds rose solemnly over the now hushed wardroom. Greve played the piano well, and the ship's company liked listening to him. The heavy brassy chords gradually grew lighter and softer, melting into pellucid triads. When these notes died away in the heights, melting like airy clouds, the Chaplain drew an audible sigh.

"A gift of God, music!" he said, waxing sentimental. "What a cleansing of the soul! You play beautifully, Greve, you touch my heartstrings. . . . What is that piece you've been playing?"

"*The Death of Asa*," Greve answered, rising. "Let's go to your cabin, Vetkin, and have a chat."

"A Christian's death, delectable music," the Chaplain repeated with pleasure, and got up, yawning. "I'll go and have a nap after the morning's exertions."

The custodians of tradition distinguish various kinds of sleep in the Navy: the *basic* sleep—in a berth, undressed, from 2 a.m. to 7.30 a.m.; the *extra morning* sleep—a catnap in an armchair after the crew have been detailed to their jobs; the *consolation* sleep—from 4.30 to 10 a.m. when, after the dogwatch, officers are allowed semi-officially not to attend at colours; the *sanctioned* sleep—from lunch to 2 p.m. in the time allowed by regulations; the *preliminary* sleep—forty winks in an armchair before dinner; the *extra evening* sleep—a hundred-and-fifty-minute nap after dinner to sleep off the mellowing effects of the wine. And, finally, sometimes after a gay night ashore, the *admiral's watch*—stretching from breakfast till dinner and incorporating the sanctioned and the preliminary. This requires certain precautions, briefly summed up in the mnemonic rule: "If you want a good sleep use someone else's

cabin", which safeguards against unexpected summonses to the Commander.

People in the know assert that a good naval officer should be able to felicitously combine all these varied forms of sleep with routine duties and take catnaps at any time and in any pose so as to snatch from the harsh clutches of the service the eight hours of sleep which are due to any normal person. And this is no easy matter, considering how hard and varied a naval officer's duties are. Regular watches, the need to get up every day to attend at colours, the management of his company or unit, the necessity, imposed by his social position, of frequenting restaurants till a late hour, friendly talks in the ward-room over a glass of liqueur, which often drag out into the small hours of morning—all these stern and arduous duties of a naval officer leave no time for sleep. Yet at any moment the Oath and the Commander may demand the fullest exertion of a man's mental and physical powers, and to meet that exigency one must have a cool head and a relaxed body, that is, a good sleep. Those who are philosophically inclined would add another reason, namely, that inasmuch as war was bound to break out sooner or later when you would get no sleep at all, it was advisable to get your sleep in advance in peacetime.

Mess No. 20, where the stokers of Company 8 were housed, had never seen the light of day. It had even been built by electric light, deep down in the ship's bowels under three decks. The air there was kept fresh by ceaselessly humming ventilators, which set up a constant draught in the crew's quarters, sealed off within the ship like a tin of sardines. In summer, it stirred the slack hot air over the naked sweltering bodies of the sleeping men; in winter it froze them with icy blasts. With the introduction in the Navy of iron-bound ships, the incidence of rheumatic diseases in the fleet as a result of living in these steel cages exposed to constant draughts and fluctuating temperatures, more than doubled. At sea, when the bulkheads and deck, hot from their proximity to the stokeholds, roast the men living there, water instead of fresh air streams from the ventilating ducts: a wave, unable to lift the heavy bow of the battleship, sweeps over the deck and floods the cowl, putting the ventilators out of commission.

Life on the mess deck is like an eternal bivouac. A man needs sleep, food, water to wash himself, a place to relieve nature, room to keep his things, and to rest in. Whereas Lieutenant Livitin had a cabin to do all these things in—a comfortable apartment in minia-

ture with the wardroom on top of it—the sailor found all these common needs of man scattered all over the ship by builders and regulations as if by a bomb explosion which sends all the splinters flying. The washroom was two decks up; the smoking place—fo’c’sle upper deck in all weathers, rain or frost; the heads—a distance of from fifty to three-hundred paces, not counting hatchways; some of his dunnage—in a locker shared by two, the rest in a big chest kept in the locker-room, where he could only go when piped to it; his hammock stowed in the nettings on the upper deck, sodden with rain and damp in summer, half-frozen in winter when the sailor expelled the chill from pillow and blanket with the warmth of his body.

According to the time of day, the mess served as dining-room, bedroom, classroom, and resting-place. At the command of the magic whistle, the mess underwent transformations: hammocks were slung, cabbage soup steamed, the place emptied or became crowded, was charmed into silence, filled with song, or flooded with water at cleaning time. Thirty-two stokers of Division 4 lived in the mess, while one man—the Captain—occupied space enough to accommodate the whole division and twelve extra men on top of it. The lino-covered iron tables were set close together. The stokers sat at them in idle anticipation of the mess-can, which was still a long way off in the hands of the cook of the mess, who was queueing up at the galley. Usually before dinner there was a loud hum of voices and an aimless clatter of spoons on tables, drowning the noise of the ventilators. But today an air of gloom prevailed. The word “court-martial” flew from table to table, bringing back that sickening sense of fear that had assailed everyone when the stokers, after they had seemingly got away with that morning’s outburst, were hauled off one by one to Vetkin’s or Gudkov’s cabin.

“I could understand if there was something in it! The whole thing isn’t worth a tinker’s damn!”

“I should worry, let them have the law on us!” Ezofatov said, putting on a bold front. “You ask Venglovsky over there—do they eat us sailors with their porridge? Come on Venglovsky, tell ’em about the can!”

Venglovsky looked up with a smile on his thin lips. He had returned last winter from disciplinary barracks, where he had been sent because he wanted to give his child, conceived out of wedlock, a name. The company commander, who had a grudge against him, had refused him permission to marry. Josepha had been eight months gone with child when Venglovsky forged the signature of Sub-

Lieutenant von Neuhardt to the permit and stamped it with the seal which he had stolen from his cabin. The child was rid of the shameful word "natural" that would otherwise have been written into its future passport, but Venglovsky was given eighteen months disciplinary barracks.

"One prison's much like another," he said indifferently. "Here we're convicts with shoulder straps, there they don't have them. That's the only difference."

Vailis looked at him across the tables and shook his head.

"Shut your ash-hole, Venglovsky! Such things are not spoken aloud."

"Who'll hear it? There are no outsiders here!"

"All the same, words like those have wings! They fly where they shouldn't—to officers' ears."

"Will *you* blow the gaff?"

"You're a fool, Venglovsky," Vailis said calmly.

Vailis had been promoted from stoker to petty officer of the same division six months before on the recommendation of Sub-Lieutenant Morozov, who thought him more intelligent and better educated than the rest.

A good petty officer, of course, could not have ignored such remarks passed by his subordinates in his presence. But Vailis was not a good petty officer, since he believed that authority was won by respect, not fear, on the part of the sailors. This he had easily achieved by treating the men fairly, with even-tempered Lettish equanimity.

The stokers had at first eyed his badges askance, but before long they lost the distrust usually associated with the yellow or white braid on the shoulders of the jumper, which to them stood for informer, sneak, whose very presence was dangerous. Vailis was not that kind of man.

"Now then, mates!" he sang out, smiling calmly. "You're not burying a favourite aunt! Keep your peckers up! At the worst I'll drop the killick, and you'll go grouse-shooting. Let's feed, nothing like a plate of borshch to calm you down."

The borshch had already been brought in, in tinned copper mess-cans. The table linoleum was covered with congealing grease—mess-cans stood in the middle of the tables, and the spoons travelling from pot to mouth kept dripping on the tables; the men who sat at the ends preferred to eat standing, reaching out to the mess-cans with their spoons over the shoulders of the sitters. The meat, scooped out and heaped straight onto the tables (plates and forks were not

in the sailors' kit list), was cut up with jackknives, the marrow of the bones shaken out onto the linoleum of the tables; they ate with their hands, passing pieces to each other whenever the senior man at each mess-can commanded: "Meat!" after a preliminary bang on the table with his spoon.

The admirals sitting in the panelled offices of the Admiralty Board, who set the behaviour pattern of the sailor with orders and regulations, knew the common people of Russia perfectly well. These people differed from cattle only in their ability to drink vodka, to utter words (mostly unprintable) and to take their hat off when confronted by the squire. The muzhik was not squeamish: he would eat his cabbage soup from the same bowl with syphilitics, and take meat from hands that had just been scratching sweaty private parts.

Having eaten and belched, they left the duty-men to wash the tables and mess-cans and made preparations to get their heads down. Regulations forbade any hard work to be started soon after dinner unless there was important cause, and recommended giving the crew sufficient time for relaxation, during which no honours even were rendered to passing admirals. Rest time was sacred. The whole ship slept, except the watch and defaulters; the latter "went grouse-shooting" (that is, did sentry duty amidships or worked in a special fatigue party employed on dirty tasks).

To give the men a good rest—considering that they were up at five and had been working since six in the morning—they were given the run of the locker-rooms and the deck for an hour. Both were of iron. It was best to sleep on one's stomach, head pillowed on one's arms, and one leg bent under at a right angle. The weight of the body then falls on its soft parts—the stomach, forearms and thighs. Some preferred to sleep on their backs, mouths open, heads thrown back, snoring terrifically. In any event, this "happy hour" had to be made full use of, because the rest of the day, from call-hands till "sling hammocks", the sailor was strictly forbidden to lie about.

A whistle sounded from above, followed by the voice of the boatswain's mate, shouting:

"Division 4 fall in on the upper deck!"

Those who were still awake, sprang to their feet. The stokers were alarmed. The sense of foreboding which had haunted them since morning, brought the others to their feet too. The whistle was unexpected, puzzling—to fall in at relaxation time?

"Don't go, mates, it's a trap!" Ezofatov shouted frantically. He was sitting on the table, where he had lain down to sleep, arms flung wide; the scared look on his face frightened the others.

Vailis slapped him on the back.

"Pipe down there, shut your gate, you're making a draught," he said looking up at the hatchway as if he would penetrate the designs of their chiefs through the three decks. "No panic, now!"

In the ensuing silence, the men listened anxiously to the humming ventilators. What a scary browbeaten life a sailor's was!

"Division 5 fall in on the upper deck!" another, more distant voice, shouted.

The stokers looked at each other. Vailis went up the ladder and poked his head out into the mess above. Then he looked down through the crook of his elbow, and said quietly:

"Well, you poor yaps, no need to do it in your pants! We're going to sea."

Ezofatov relieved his feelings with a long oath.

Lieutenant Vetkin missed his midday nap too. He had to question Lieutenant Greve after lunch. He realised then with gratification that the enquiry was completed, and everything was clear, clear as mud. He sent for Sub-Lieutenant Gudkov and briefly gave him his own personal conclusion drawn from the evidence in the case, and left it to Gudkov to embody it in a joint official report, while he stretched himself in an armchair and composed himself for the "sanctioned" sleep with the feelings of a man who had done what was required of him by Oath, Country and ship's commander.

Sub-Lieutenant Gudkov, pencilled eyebrows raised high above his colourless eyes (because every thought he was now consigning to paper was of tremendous significance), scratched away busily with his pen, pausing now and then to turn over the pages with a loud rustling in his excited search for the most incriminating passages, heavily underlined by Vetkin. At five minutes to two he slapped the blotter down on the last line of the conclusions, and Lieutenant Vetkin opened his eyes.

"Fine! All's well that ends well!" he said, stretching himself with satisfaction, and chasing sleep from his face with a cold jet from the washstand, he put on a fresh tunic, cleaned his nails, took his report together with the file of evidence and went to see the Captain.

At four o'clock the *Generalissimo* weighed anchor and made for firing area Eight-B, carefully steering her huge bulk through the shallow waters of the sound between the pretty islands of the Helsingfors skerries. On one of the beaches, under daintily coloured sunshades, lay two ladies in bathing costumes.

"Look, the *Generalissimo* is going to sea," one of them murmured in a languid pleasant voice.

"Those poor naval officers!" the other sighed. "They have to go to sea when everyone else is on holiday. It's dreadful, the way they torture them with this sea service!"

Suddenly she stood up to her full height, casting her sunshade aside. Her body, in its close-fitting knitted costume, struck a graceful effective pose. The *Generalissimo* swung round a sharp bend in the fairway, bringing the guns of her after turret to bear on the beach. The poised provocative figure with dazzling white legs suddenly swam into the field of the periscope, caught in the cross hairs of its intersections. It was almost unbelievable. Yuri's pulses quickened; hastily, he turned the working head. The woman then appeared on figure 2 and smiled at the boy, a frank tantalising smile. The powerful lens of the turret periscope distinctly revealed the shadows of the wet silk on her breast, tracing its smooth round contours. The entrancing vision, linked with the battleship by the laws of optics and a youth's sudden fancy, floated away together with the shore.

The shore! The shore! The wonderful shore of the Russian Imperial Navy! A shore from which one tears oneself away only to renew the thrill of homecoming, to appreciate anew the glamour of its cities and its people. The shore of elegant women, in love with the distant roar of cannon and the close whisper of lieutenants' lips; the shore of cars and restaurants, of scented hands reaching for the long-idling cruise money; the shore of admiring crowds, respectful salutations and doffed caps—the shore conquered by the Navy. It sees a youth off to sea, with a send-off vision of a woman's silk-sheathed breasts. It greets his homecoming, with the twinkling lights of its beacons, like the coloured lamps over the tables at Fenia's; it brings to him, through binoculars, hazy tantalising glimpses of country houses and homes, the sweet life of which will never be known to the seafarer. It welcomes him on the granite quayside, like Columbus discovering his hundredth and ever-surprising America, and throws its delights at his feet. Behind the boy is the grim sea, mighty warships, the stern splendid charter of the steel monastery, lustre and power, and hundreds who share with him his dominion of the shore. Their lips have kissed the hard steel of the voice-pipes, their fingers have pressed the levers of instruments, their eyes have looked on dry death and wet, their ears have heard the harsh din of battle. They yearn for the shore, for life, for women's lips and the soft fabric over soft breasts—and this shall

be ours, for who would dare deny these things to us, the masters, conquerors and defenders of the Navy's shore!

"Get out of the way now, Yuri," Livitin's voice came from below and a hand jerked at his trouser leg. "There'll soon be General Quarters!"

"Get out of the way!" Three more years of it! Three years before he'd win the legitimate right to feel himself master of this splendid and glamorous life! Yuri rotated the wheel, the periscope stared at the blank water, and the woman in the bathing suit vanished from his life.

The turret was brilliantly lit up and quiet, as in an operating-theatre. Inside this block of steel, moulded into the quaint shapes of armour plates, platforms and shafts, the blue-and-white figures of the sailors moved about noiselessly and weightlessly. Grey and huge, like the sagging backside of an elephant, the breech of the gun moved up and down almost imperceptibly in the glare of the turret-well, where the gleaming rails of the loading-cage plunged sheerly into the ammunition-hoist below. It seemed incredible that this thick ugly stump, entangled in a maze of wires, tapered beyond the turret into a faultlessly slender forward-straining barrel.

Here human thought was annealed into a mass of moving steel, sublimated by the nervous energy of the electric current. Over fifty tons of almost sentient steel were set in motion, correctly to the millimetre, by the stubby peasant fingers of Gunlayer 1st Class Kobyakov.

Gunlayer Kobyakov was attached to the gun like a special mechanism binding together its glass and steel parts. He kept the cross wires of the sights on the point of aim; in addition, he pressed the pedal, causing an explosion of three hundred and twenty pounds of powder in the bore.

The silence of suspense, accentuated by the steady hum of motors, reigned in the turret. Every click of the instruments made Yuri's heart leap in expectation of the deafening roar of the salvo, and each time he would throw a swift glance at Kobyakov to see if he had opened his mouth. But Kobyakov, with his right eye glued to the rubber rim of the sight-piece and his left screwed up, was biting his lip with the concentration of laying the gun carefully.

Clearly framed in the sight field stood the canvas target. Its base was made of huge rough logs, and the butt-end of the right-hand log, to which the first pole was nailed, was clearly visible in the sight. Kobyakov had seen many a stump like that when stubbing the field for which his father had now been ordered to pay the rent.

He touched the wheel, and the thread of the sight settled on the base of the target. On the accuracy of his sighting depended his father's lighter lot; after good shooting practice the gunlayers received a ruble each from Livitin. The hundred and nine ruble debt to Zasetsky had to be scraped together in every possible way.

As it happened, Zasetsky, the landowner, needed the money immediately. Although the manager of the Nobles' Bank, with which the estate was mortgaged, was on intimate terms with Zasetsky, he could not postpone interest payments on the loan. The financial authorities were pressing for a quick turnover to pay the house of Jerrs & Co. for the cotton that went to make the gun-cotton supplied by the government factories to the Navy.

And so it happened that, unknown to Kobyakov, the currency circulation completed its circle in the after turret of the *Generalissimo*, as Kobyakov, foot groping for the pedal, was preparing to burn thousands of rubles in the gun's barrel, among them the hundred and nine rubles which he needed to save their farm from ruin.

All of a sudden the turret heaved, and something struck Yuri painfully in the shoulder. Reeling, he caught a look of dismay on the face of the gun-turret electrician, who had pulled the firing-switch. Clanging, roaring, hissing noises filled the turret. From out of the pit, huge as a grand piano set on end, there shot up the loading-hoist; it caught up with the gun and cleaved to its now opened jaws, while at the same time a hissing snake of steel darted out, stiffening in its path into a resilient rod. The snake rammed the shell home and darted back again. On its way back it caught the side of a brass box over the loading-tray, from which the silk-wrapped cylinder of the half-charge rolled out, slamming the door behind it. The snake lunged forward, drove it into the muzzle, and on its way back dropped the second half-charge into the tray; with a short angry blow it rammed this half-charge home too, and disappeared, grating and clanking, into its cavern, while the loading-hoist plunged downward into the abyss as swiftly as it had appeared. The breech-block returned to its place with the squirming movement of a worm burrowing its way home, and silence descended upon the turret once more, accentuated by the hum of the motors.

It dawned on Yuri, now looking abashed and confused, that this had been a shot, not a catastrophe. The report could not be heard in the turret, and so there had been no need to open one's mouth. It had happened so quickly that the shell was still on its way to the target.

Hurled from the muzzle at the unimaginable speed of a kilometre a second, it shot up into the evening sky almost vertically, creating its own thunder and anticipating the sound of discharge. But the inexorable force of gravity pulled it downward, steadily shortening its flight path. Its pointed nose dipped seaward—a burning-hot, roaring, madly spinning object of the fierce hidden struggle waged by numerous mechanical forces—the explosion of powder-gases, the earth's gravity, the resistance of the air, gun elevation, inertia of the ship at the moment of firing, and inertia of the shell's own rotation. The composition of all these forces, calculated beforehand in firing tables, launched the projectile towards its aim and flung it into the water near the target. The soundless splash rose in a gleaming pillar of silver spray.

The spray was indeed a silver one; this magnificent fountain had cost three thousand two hundred rubles.

In Lieutenant Livitin's brain, however, these watery columns rising behind the target like gigantic candles had neither price nor beauty—they were simply the artilleryman's "overs". Like water, which, moistening the lines made by an indelible pencil, brings the writing out bright and clear, so the blood, rushing to those convolutions of Livitin's brain, which, year by year, had stored up the impressions, patterns and figures that comprised his sum of knowledge in gunnery, brought all these out vividly, thrusting all other irrelevant impressions aside. The intricate chain of conditioned reflexes forged by long training of the brain, had short-circuited sight and speech, leaving the brain free to deal with more difficult problems. And so the three shell splashes behind the target were instantly translated into the command:

"Down two hundred! Left five!"

The electrician switched on the transmission system, the sight-setters made the necessary adjustments, and three Kobyakovs relaid the newly elevated and deflected guns aimed at the lower edge of the target.

"Shoot!" Livitin commanded quietly, and another ten thousand rubles rolled off his lips as the turret shook with a circular movement, as one shakes a watch that has stopped going.

That boy in the old French fairy-tale had the same gift—with every word he uttered a shining gold coin flew out of his mouth. The lieutenant's words produced much greater profits, although he would seem to be destroying money rather than creating it. The ten thousand rubles destroyed by the word "shoot" created an immediate need for more powder, shells and guns to make up for

those destroyed by the discharge. All over the country and the world, men, unknown to Livitin, got busy selling, buying, engaging workers, drawing up blueprints, inventing formulas, receiving or giving bribes. Sterling, dollars, marks, rubles, francs and yens—a sea of multifarious money, agitated by the shell splashes, rushed headlong into the surging eddying void made by the blasted ten thousand rubles, hurrying to create new values in their stead. Cotton, iron, coal, steel, chemical, grain and timber workers all over the world worked a minute extra over and above the time required to earn their keep. The values created during that minute made good the ten thousand rubles which Lieutenant Livitin had flung into the sea, and part of these profits reached him in the form of his lieutenant's pay.

And so it happened that this new circle of monetary circulation, unknown to Livitin, was completed in the after turret of the *Generalissimo*, just as Kobyakov's had done, except that Kobyakov, in pressing the pedal, was destroying his own money and growing poorer for it, whereas Livitin was destroying other people's money and growing richer for it. The target was straddled and the rate of firing could be accelerated.

The *Generalissimo* described a smooth semi-circle round the target, her bows ripping up the blue sheet of water and turning back the white edges, and her screws at the stern grinding the tattered shreds. This huge, majestic creation of big industry rode the sea, squandering money all the time. Money shot out of the guns together with the yellow flare of the salvo; it spread across the sky in black smoke from the belching funnels; it was churned up by the bearings in a viscid flow of costly foreign lubricant; and it was crushed as in a mincing machine by the blades of the powerful turbines. Money melted in the water, for this ship, built to protect the ruble against the dollar and the franc, became obsolete before she was launched. While she was being built the dollars and marks went into better armour and better guns, against which this ship was no longer any good. But now, blinded by her own power, she thundered salvoes, rocking slowly under the recoil of her guns, huge, majestic, like a fighting elephant.

Stunned by the roar, awed by the sight, Yuri looked on with shining eyes, his lips parted in a delighted smile. Wonderful thing, gunnery! He began to understand the almost affectionate tone in which Nikolai spoke of his turret. What a pity it would soon be over!

Indeed, it was soon over. The peasants and workmen in sailor's rig, to each of whom, in private life, a twenty-five ruble note was a

fortune, had chucked a hundred and fifty thousand rubles into the sea in eleven minutes, and when the "Cease fire!" sounded, turned up on deck with the indifferent air of men who had done their job.

Target practice had been a success, and the bridge was elated. The ship made for Helsingfors. The sun dipped seawards, its long warm rays licking the sixty-eight wounds inflicted on the sea. Greve, with narrowed gaze, looked at the red flattened disc, which was now harmless to the eye.

"Now for a mouthful of something to eat," he said to Buturlin. "Will we drop the old mudhook by ten, Pilot? If we don't I'll miss the fun—the Vlasovs are throwing a party."

"Round about that time," Buturlin answered, taking the plugs of cotton wool out of his ears. "An hour and a half's run—you'll make it."

Yuri ascended the signal-bridge. From there the sea looked immense. The sky, slashed by the shells, oozed the warm blood of sunset. The air, cool and flowing, slightly acrid with smoke, filled his lungs. He breathed freely, happily, and in a spirit of good fellowship said to the signalman, who was deftly lashing up the bridge-apron, which had been taken down for target practice:

"What a lovely evening!"

"Beg your pardon, sir?" the man responded—he had not caught the words through the rustling canvas.

"Look at the sunset, I say. Can't you see it?"

The signalman dropped what he was doing and turned anxiously towards the sun, raising his binoculars to his eyes. He scanned the horizon, searching for what had attracted the midshipman's attention. The crimson circle in the binoculars glowed and shimmered, sea and sky blended in a peaceful monotone, and there was not a thing in sight. But slightly to the right the signalman saw something worthy of attention, and lowering his binoculars, he eyed Yuri with respect.

"Quite right, sir, the Admiral's coming," he said, and ran to the Leading Signalman by the bridge wing.

The ships were fast closing in. The flagship was standing south, her rear-admiral's flag fluttering against the sunset.

"All hands aft!" was sounded on the *Generalissimo*, and the men quickly lined up along the sides. Lieutenant Greve was perturbed.

"What's he doing at sea on a Saturday?" he said to Buturlin in an undertone. "The Old Man's up to something, if you ask me."

The flagship passed clear of the *Generalissimo* within half a mile. A striped flag hung from her foremast.

"The Admiral's signalling 'Follow me in line ahead,' sir," the voice of the Leading Signalmen boomed down.

"Hard aport!" the Commander said, showing no surprise.

The water hissing at her stern, the ship smoothly answered the helm, altered her course, and followed in the wake of the flagship. Helsingfors and all that it held for Greve dropped astern. Greve descended the bridge and made for the poop, flicking up his cap-cover from behind with two fingers, which gave it the shape of a chef's cap. The officers on the poop laughed. Worn in this way, the cap said: "I'm annoyed with the Gold Braid!"

"Gentlemen, Greve's got a grievance," Vetkin said, throwing his cigarette into the tub (officers were allowed to smoke on the poop deck).

"The old fool!" Greve said with genuine vexation. "Where the devil's he taking us? To Revel?"

"My dear chap, mysterious are the ways of the Gold Braid," Vetkin said soothingly. "Learn to take things on the chin, man. You'll miss this date. Let's go and have a brandy. I won a bet from the padre—he said the Admiral would let us alone."

"Come along," Greve said despairingly. "It's raining coal dust here."

Their feet crunched on the coal dust ejected with the smoke from the funnels. The ventilators in the stokehold were howling, and at regular intervals a bell rang. The stokers would then throw open the furnaces, and the heat would flood the deck in a sweltering wave. Ezofatov stood sideways at the furnace, his face turned away, as he shovelled coal onto the brittle layer of white heat. The furnace closed with a bang and Ezofatov straightened up.

"What's the time there, Vailis?" he asked, carefully wiping his gashed cheek with the back of his hand.

"About ten, I should say."

"When do we anchor, do you know?"

"I had a silly old aunt," Vailis said, pausing to extract a speck of coal dust from his eye with a black finger. "She died of curiosity. She was always wanting to know the date of the Second Advent."

"What are you jabbering about?"

"How am I to know, you chump? Phone up the Chief Engineer, he'll tell you."

"But where are we going? Back to harbour?"

Vailis did not reply. He stared at the water gauge. The stokehold has no direction. It merely has time, measured by the bells of the

furnace gauges and the number of shovel-throws. The ship could cast anchor, she could go to America, or go to the bottom—the stokers would be the last to know it. Silly questions!

At midnight the fourth division of stokers were relieved. Tired and ill-tempered, they went up to the mess deck; the hammocks already hung in rows in the light of the green police lamps, and the night air was hot, stuffy and fetid.

After a shower bath, Vailis went up on deck to smoke. The ship rode at anchor, silent, huge, motionless. The shore was hidden in the haze of a spring night. The water was bright. Across it lay the green light of a buoy; on the starboard beam glowed the red light of a lighthouse, and on the port loomed the great bulk of a vessel with the Admiral's light burning high up in the sky. The place was unknown to Vailis. But what did it matter? Nothing changed, wherever the ship lay.

The night sang with the hum of ventilators and the tinkle of water trickling over the side, and the delicate nostalgic fragrance of northern spring was wafted up from the shore.

"Can't sleep, eh?" a voice sounded next to him. Vailis turned, peering into the darkness; he recognised Tulmankov, a gunner of Company 4. They had struck up an acquaintance during similar meetings on the fo'c'sle. Tulmankov had once seen Vailis reading a book there. It was from the ship's library and was entitled *The Defence of Sevastopol as Told by Its Heroes*. Tulmankov had started to laugh at Vailis for reading such rubbish, and was always promising to give him a worthwhile book to read, but he never kept his promise.

"I hear you took the bastard down to his right size?" he said interrogatively, leaning forward for a light. "Good luck to you! He's been asking for it. Pity you didn't punch his jaw while you were at it."

Vailis shrugged.

"I'm not that crazy, I know what you can get for that. The stuff's not worth the candle."

"A pity you didn't warn us," Tulmankov said slowly. "In case of anything the sailors would have cracked down on him. He'd be swimming with the fishes, the bastard. How did you manage to put your men up to it—complaining, I mean? The stokers don't know much about it."

Vailis put out his pipe.

"I don't know what you're driving at. Nobody put them up to anything, they started it themselves. Time to turn in."

"Hold on, man! What are you afraid of? This is a serious business. You'll be court-martialled. . . . We must talk this over."

"There's nothing to talk about, Tulmankov," Vailis said doggedly. "Let them court-martial me, I've done nothing wrong. The truth will come out at the trial."

"The wolf tried the goat, then gobbled him up!" Tulmankov sneered. "You're a fool, Vailis, you've got to use your own brains!"

"I don't need somebody else's," Vailis said, getting up.

"Wait a minute, you crazyboots! Sit down. Listen."

Vailis reluctantly complied. Tulmankov, speaking in a low voice and looking round all the time, amplified his idea. Vailis and all the stokers were to spread it among the crew that instead of giving them a hearing the Commander had all but assaulted them. The sailors had to be made to see that men were being court-martialled for seeking the truth. They had to be urged to take the men's side and demand a fair deal. When the court-martial was ordered, Vailis was to run to the upper deck, shouting, "Save us, mates!" This would be the signal for Tulmankov's men to get the sailors moving. They would kill all the officers and run up the red flag. The other ships would be waiting for the signal to—

Vailis got up in the middle of the sentence.

"A calf was going to eat the wolf," he said angrily. "He put the whole herd up to it. They were all very brave, like you, and boasted that they were many. The wolf had a good feed that day. Good-bye! Don't mix me up in this fairy-tale, I haven't gone crackers yet. You won't see me in the same chain-gang with you. It was chaps like you who brought their mates to the gallows the year before last. Find yourself a bigger fool."

Tulmankov lingered, puffing at his cigarette. Then he tossed it into the spit-kid; it described a glowing arc and died with a hiss.

"Ugh, they've got no guts!" he said aloud, and walked aft to Company 4. On the quarterdeck, the soft sounds of a piano floated up from the open skylight of the wardroom. Tulmankov bent over the skylight. A warm rosy radiance fell on the soft pile of dark carpet against which there stood out sharply four pairs of legs in white trousers stretched out from four armchairs. The bodies of the sitters were not visible, but the legs, forming a gleaming white cross, were comfortably complacent. Tulmankov's glance darted among the eight soles of the suede shoes like a spinning bomb that would explode at any moment. He thrust his head in further, his trousers drawing taut on the seat. It was on this taut-drawn surface that the pipe-chain came down with a hard smack. Tulmankov jumped up.

"Nosy parker! What d'yer think this is—a peep-show?" the Petty Officer of the Watch said in a low tone so 'as not to be heard in the wardroom.

He watched Tulmankov run off to the hatchway, then pocketed his whistle and leaned against the skylight, listening to the music. His head nodded in time with the music and he toyed with the pipe-chain across his chest. This second whistle he had received when taking over the watch and it was used only to pipe the hands.

The night was waning and freshening, and a faint breeze, like a sigh, ran through it now and again. The sea lay spread in a smooth luminous sheet and the nostalgic scents of northern spring stole up from the shore. The *Generalissimo* slept, listening to Lieutenant Greve's music, fretful, resentful, startled by the soft tread of the petty officers, gathering strength to meet the new day of the week.

The seventh day, Sunday, was being ushered in—a day given over to rest, recreation and communion with God.

CHAPTER 6

Call-hands was half an hour late—at six. The ship was hosed down again, scrubbed with soap and sand, the brasswork was polished, and the men shifted into black trousers and jumpers. The flag was hoisted with ceremony, the band playing on the flagship. The sailors stood in a blue-white-and-black line as if moulded with the deck, straight and motionless as the uprights of the taffrail behind them. They barked out the official greeting, eyes following the Captain's straggling reddish moustaches. In the Captain's wake came Shiyanov; on drawing level with Company 8 he felt nervous. But the stokers responded like all the others—with a loud, cheerful, jerky greeting. At 8.15 the Captain went aboard the flagship.

Boatswain Netoporchuk loved Sundays and holidays, when the ship shone like a new penny, and an air of solemn elation reigned, especially on days like this, when the sun was bright and gladsome. After colours he went down to his cabin.

Strictly speaking, this was just an iron cupboard, four paces by three, electric-lighted, without a skylight and without air either, artificially ventilated; the starboard bulkhead fell away steeply, the cabin being built under the hatch leading to the stokehold.

Inside this iron cupboard for the man was another iron cupboard for things, and there, by force of old naval habit, Netoporchuk kept

his ditty-box. He took it out and got himself a handkerchief—it was a holiday today.

The box was fourteen-year-old. It had been made in his “goon” days—that first dreary winter of naval service. The lid had a cunningly woven netting of sail-thread pasted on the outside; in the centre—a reef-knot resembling a four-pointed star with rays radiating from it in a fisherman’s-bend pattern, the rays interwoven with clovehitches; the frame of the netting was made of mat strips. It was a beautiful painstaking piece of work. During the early years of his sea service the evenings dragged heavily, and the young sailor, afterwards topman, then boatswain’s mate and Boatswain Pakhom Netoporchuk had woven into the exquisite symmetry of the knotted pattern, buried in it forever, all his self-regrets, all the poignant yearning for the green quiet scenes of his rustic youth. The village was far away and he had no relatives there. There had once been the cowherd Pakhom, an orphan boy, but he, too, was no more. . . .

On the inside lid pictures were pasted close together, edge to edge, forming one large picture. They were real naval pictures, and the boatswain loved this lid of his. In the left-hand corner was the “Tiger’s Tail” battery at Port Arthur engaging Japanese destroyers at fantastically close range. Next to it was a postcard showing the sinking of the *Steregushchy* with a sailor opening the Kingston valve with one hand and crossing himself with the other—the hero’s name printed below. Then there was a portrait of the Tsar in the uniform of a commodore. Next a diver sitting on the ocean floor with fishes swimming around, and a naked mermaid on his knees. Then a bridge between two towers, the great bridge spanning the Thames—a souvenir of London; they had gone foreign—Netoporchuk, chosen for his tall stature, being sent down to London from Portsmouth with a naval platoon to the wedding of some king or other. The bridge had a woman pasted to it—who that woman was no one knew—Baron Fitinghoff, whose servant he had been, had given the picture to him—a naked beautiful woman with a flower in her teeth.

Below it was a real picture, done in colour: a sailor sitting in the boulevard spooning with a nurse, a full-blown cuddlesome lady, who let the pram roll away, the baby in it squalling. The sailor had his arm about the nurse and was kissing her passionately on the mouth; he wore a black moustache, a well-ironed jumper, and a knife-edged cap you could almost cut bread with. His disengaged hand was on his hip and one eye was cocked on a passing soldier, a poor puny specimen of an army grabby. At the bottom of the picture was the inscription “Sailors Always in the Lead”. Netoporchuk himself was

always timid with women—God had passed him over when handing out looks. He had a potato-nose, a seamed patchy face, a ginger moustache, and a shy disposition to boot—no nursemaid would take a second look at him! But the picture appealed to him, and so did the legend it bore—if it wasn't him, it was that other one with the black moustaches; at least a sailor!

Another picture showed the cruiser *Oleg* plunging into a tremendous head-sea, which covered half the gallant ship. It was a clever snapshot, taken from a porthole close to the water, but the effect was stunning. And, of course, there was the *Generalissimo*, front and side view. And Netoporchuk himself, in his second year of re-engagement service—he had just won his stripes. The photograph showed him sitting on a chair, outspread fingers clutching his knees, eyes staring, chest thrown out, and a mug that ought to have been returned to the issuing room; it was no oil painting, that face, and Netoporchuk didn't like it at all; he had pasted it in because there was no one to send it to and because there was room for it in the lid.

The box was neatly packed, everything had its place; on the left-hand side was a special compartment for needles, cotton and buttons—a sailor has no one to patch and darn for him, and had to take care of his own clothes. There was a tin of brass polish wrapped up in a bit of cloth, and a button-polisher—a slat with a hole cut out in it for cleaning buttons. Next to it lay a penholder with a nib stuck into a ring of plaited hair. There was a good deal of writing to do—not letters, he had no one to write to—chits to the storekeeper for soap, soda and ropes. Netoporchuk wrote slowly gripping his pen like a marlinspike, with all five fingers; his handwriting was scrawly. Lieutenant Vetkin had laughed at him the other day when he was signing his evidence. "Put your tongue away, you big baby," he said. Those educated gentlemen, of course, were quick writers, and the lieutenant had a beautiful hand. He crossed the words out only once, when Netoporchuk couldn't remember whether Vailis, after "Colours", had shouted out "Don't dismiss, we'll lodge a complaint". Netoporchuk respectfully explained that he had left the stokers immediately and gone aft, and so he had heard nothing. The lieutenant got angry, and Netoporchuk was flustered. When an officer shouts at you, you get the wind up and don't know what you're saying. So you say, "Quite correct, sir!" After that everything went smoothly, and Lieutenant Vetkin read out his deposition. Netoporchuk listened, marvelling at the fluency

of his own speech, but at one point he asked the lieutenant to read the passage over again.

"When the 'Carry on' sounded, the stokers wanted to dismiss, but Vailis stepped forward and shouted: 'Don't dismiss, mates, we'll lodge a complaint, we won't let them bully us, the crew will back us up!'"

"No, sir, I didn't hear anything like that," Netoporchuk said, plucking up courage. "As I was telling you, sir, as soon as 'Colours' was over, I went straight to the poop, sir. There was a hold up in scrub deck there, sir."

That was where the lieutenant had started crossing out and swearing, but one thing Netoporchuk knew firmly—and that was, you must never lie to an officer's face; he had been taught that since his recruit days—"always speak the truth to your superiors"—he had sworn to it when taking the oath. So they crossed out that whole passage, although the lieutenant cursed him for an old dolt.

This enquiry business had upset the boatswain. It worked out that if he had allowed the stokers to make a dash for the hatchway there would not have been all this fuss and bother. But acting like that, he would not have been doing the right thing. Colours was a sacred rite, you dare not budge an inch, and here they were like a herd of cattle. Disorderly conduct!

Nevertheless, he had an uneasy feeling about it, and all kinds of disturbing thoughts had crept into his head last night, preventing sleep, until at last he had got the whole thing clear in his mind. Breach of regulations—that's what it was. The stokers had refused to dismiss when ordered to do so, and he had had nothing to do with it. Regulations were made to be obeyed. Where would the service be if every man did as he pleased! The whole ship would go to pieces before you knew it.

The door opened without a knock and a white tunic filled the whole doorway. Netoporchuk jumped up by force of habit, then smiled respectfully. It was not an officer, but Stoker Warrant Officer 'Ovseyets.

"Good-morning, bos'un," Ovseyets said, holding out a huge fleshy hand. "The Commander sent me to get something from the boatswain's locker."

He spoke through his nose, wheezily. His officer's tunic with its non-officer's shoulder straps sat baggily on his shoulders, and under his officer's cap (with a non-officer's badge) shone a sleek cruel face with a dashing moustache. He was a typical representative of that ship's class intermediate between officer and sailor.

Netoporchuk did not know Ovseyets well. The warrant officers kept aloof from the crew and condescended only to the more highly esteemed petty officers—those who stood a chance of rising to the same rank themselves one day. Besides, Ovseyets belonged to a different branch of the service and the boatswain had no need to look up to him.

“Hoses again, Ovseyets?” Netoporchuk spoke with dignity, but nevertheless he stood up.

“No, I want a six-stranded rope, about twenty fathoms.”

Netoporchuk pricked up his ears.

“What do you want it for?”

“It’s wanted, that’s all,” Ovseyets said evasively, wheezing into his moustache. “That’s my orders.”

Netoporchuk hesitated. Giving ropes and hawsers to the stokehold was like chucking them into the furnace. A six-stranded rope was for clean jobs—boat handling and gangways.

“Will a tarred rope do, Ovseyets? You’ll dirty it all the same.”

Ovseyets’s breath grew wheezier, and his fist clenched. He knew how to deal with his own petty officers, but with the boatswain one needed diplomacy, and this was something Ovseyets was not used to.

“Don’t be a mule, Netoporchuk. I’ve told you what the order is. If you don’t believe me, ask the Commander, he’ll tell you what’s what. It’s extra special.”

The word “Commander” had its effect.

“All right, send a hand to the rope locker,” Netoporchuk reluctantly agreed.

“Let’s go together, I’ll take it myself,” Ovseyets grunted, and they left the cabin.

The church deck was already being rigged for church. Chief Stoker Kuznetsov was cursing softly at the sailors who were putting up the icon-screen. It was made of wood panels covered with holy images, and was fitted together with bolts, hinges and clamps—convenient, easily set up, and occupying little space. Torpedo Gunner’s Mate Pilebeda, withdrawing to the centre of the deck, was kindling the censer, which he swung round in the air as if he were throwing a rope’s end.

The sight of the censer suddenly reminded Netoporchuk that an old rope’s end had been returned to the cordage store the day before; this would have done very well instead of the new rope Ovseyets was demanding. Netoporchuk caught the sleeve of a passing sailor.

“Where are you going?”

“Private business, sir.”

"What d'you mean?"

"To the heads, sir, before church service begins."

"That can wait. Run down to the fo'c'sle boatswain's stores and tell Topman Tunin to run to the cordage room. Tell him the boatswain wants him."

Kostrushkin set off at a run so as to manage both jobs at once—his errand and his private business. He sped down the clean mess-decks at top speed, and in jumping over the high coaming of a door he stumbled, nearly hitting the deck in an attempt to keep his balance, and ran headlong into something soft and substantial. A deep voice above him gasped.

Kostrushkin stood aghast—the padre!

Father Feoktist was obese, sluggish and spiteful. He glared at the man, his mouth agape with pain. If he reported this, it meant a long spell of sentry-duty. Kostrushkin was a smart, shrewd sailor, whose mind worked quickly. He put his hands together prayerfully, and, standing in a pose of involuntary obeisance, exclaimed before the Chaplain could get a word out:

"Bless me, Father!"

The Chaplain made the sign of the cross over him with a hasty habitual gesture, while his lips formed words which only a blow in the stomach could force from a man:

"God damn and blast your dirty soul, God bless you in the name of the Father the Son and the Holy Ghost!"

Then he took his hand away from Kostrushkin's lips, stroked his belly with it and asked suspiciously:

"Why this sudden hurry to be blessed? What's your name?"

"Nikifor, humble servant of the Lord. Pray for me, Father—it's my birthday today."

The reply was diplomatic and immediately put things in their right places: the Chaplain was spiritual father, the sailor spiritual son, and no names were needed.

Father Feoktist looked at him closely, not quite sure whether the man had his tongue in his cheek or not. But Kostrushkin's voice was earnest, his expression devout, and only in his eyes there lurked a cunning twinkle of sailor wisdom cultivated by two years' schooling in subterfuge and self-protection. Father Feoktist shook his head and delivered a short homily worded so as to be within easy reach of his listener's intelligence and to have a beneficial moral influence upon him as laid down in Chapter 15, Clause 3, of the Articles of War.

"You fool—God forgive me—dashing about like a madman! You've knocked my liver loose."

"Forgive me, Father, for God's sake. I stumbled."

"Stumbled! You shouldn't stumble. All right, run along. God will forgive you."

Kostrushkin stepped aside meekly and trotted off again. God would forgive him, but whether his officer would forgive if the Chaplain had reported him was more than doubtful. It wasn't his fault that the Chaplain had come out from the instrument-room, where, in accordance with the Articles of War, he was given a cabin next to the crew's quarters so as to be more accessible to them.

The Chaplain followed him with his eyes, then stepped over the coaming of the church deck, to be greeted immediately by the throaty voice of Pilebeda, which was better than music:

"Shun!"

This restored Father Feoktist's good humour. He was not entitled to such honours, but they were none the less pleasing.

"At ease, my lads!" he said in his rich bass and passed to the altar with a wave of the hand. The bell struck the hour of nine.

On the upper and mess-decks the buglers sounded muster and the crew began to gather on the church deck. After them came the officers, and last of all the Captain. He responded to Father Feoktist's questioning glance with a nod, and divine service began.

It was stuffy on the deck. The hundreds, crowded in a press of sweating bodies, did not hear the Chaplain's words, which were lost in the stifling atmosphere of the low-beamed deck space.

The Commander, standing in front of the row of officers, glanced at his watch and stepped forward, saying something to the Captain in a low voice. The red moustaches bent over the watch, and the Captain's short-cropped head nodded assent. Shiyanov crossed himself hastily as he passed the altar and climbed up the ladder, taking care not to make a noise with his heels.

At the other end of the deck Warrant Officer Ovseyets, seeing the Commander's legs appear above the altar, immediately touched the shoulder of the sailor in front of him.

"Pass the word down there, will you," he whispered. "Stoker Ezofatov in Mess No. 18—at the double!"

Ezofatov looked round. Ovseyets motioned his head towards the exit, and Ezofatov, frowning, made his way out through the ranks. He passed down the empty mess-decks, sighing and inwardly cursing: more interrogations, when would this blessed enquiry be over!

Mess No. 18 was right aft under the officers' cabins. The hatchway

leading to it was between the wardroom passageway and the passageway of the officers' quarters. Ezofatov ducked his head and clattered down the hatchway in brisk sailor fashion—and his heart sank.

At the table, in guard's uniform—with scarf and holster—sat Sub-Lieutenant Gudkov. Two Warrant Officers with holsters buckled to their white tunics stood behind him. Ezofatov looked round at the ladder—six petty officers stood there with rifles.

"Come here," the sub-lieutenant said nervously. "Name? Any money on you? Put it here. Sit down. Wait here."

In a minute Afonin tumbled down the ladder, beating a smart sailor's tattoo with his heels, and turned pale as he stepped down. He was followed by Venglovsky, Matushin and Vailis. They all tumbled into the mess like fish into a nurse-pond, and froze to the spot, bewildered. They were not allowed to speak, and an uneasy silence reigned in the mess, broken only by the rasping voice of Sub-Lieutenant Gudkov as each pair of heels came clattering down the hatchway.

"Name? Any money on you?"

Coming out onto the deserted deck, Commander Shiyarov took charge of the watch himself, as in time of battle or an emergency. He sent the watch hands to the forecabin and posted the petty officers at the hatches. They stood in grim silence, ready to push back any prying sailor's head.

Two steam-launches from the flagship with cutters in tow were approaching the port ladder of the *Generalissimo*. The empty cutters, with rearing bows (like the heads of horses hitched behind rolling carts) slapped the water with their rounded sides; on the thwarts sat silent sailors, rifles between their knees; the bayonets glinted as they swayed with the jerks of the towline. The launches dropped the cutters alongside with a faint thud, and churning the water as they shot astern, lay rocking on their own swell.

Two lieutenants and two sub-lieutenants with swords and revolvers, as on parade or on guard, came on deck, and after a word with Shiyarov, saluted and brought their men inboard. They conducted them through a door below decks straight to the officers' quarters and lined them up on both sides of the passageway leading to Mess No. 18. All this was done quietly—perhaps because the regulations forbade loud commands and all noise on the upper deck when the church pennant was flying from the mast.

One by one, just as noiselessly and quickly, the thirty-two stokers passed through the lane of sailors from another ship and stepped

down the ladder into the boats. The line of bayonets closed in behind them and glinted again in the pinnaces. The lieutenants shook Shiyanov's hand and ran down the gangway, and the coxswains commanded: "Shun!" The pinnaces rocked, and the launches swung round in a semi-circle and steered for the flagship, funnels and bayonets gleaming in the sun.

Shiyanov took out his handkerchief and wiped the inside of his collar with its folded corner. The petty officers came away from the hatches. Ovseyets toyed with the rope, now cut up in pieces, and handed it to one of the six petty officers.

"Throw it down the chute. There was no need for it—they went quietly."

They looked at each other and laughed.

The Captain's red moustache twitched, and his heavy gaze rested questioningly on Shiyanov when the latter, stepping gingerly up the ladder, appeared beside the altar. Shiyanov inclined his head reassuringly, stepped into his place, crossed himself and drew out his watch: the service was three minutes late, they were only half-way through it. Everything had to be in proper trim aboard a man-of-war, and the Lord was deferentially but firmly asked to keep the flow of his blessings within the limits set by ship routine. Shiyanov motioned Pilebeda up with his eyes—the latter was officiating at the altar. Pilebeda came up on tiptoes, fervid and solemn. He bent his shaven head to the Commander's lips.

"Tell Kuznetsov to speed up the singing. He's dragging it out."

Pilebeda nodded—you couldn't very well bark "Aye, aye, sir!" during church service—and tiptoed over to Kuznetsov, Engine-Room Artificer. Kuznetsov, volunteer precentor, loved church choirs and liturgic chanting. He listened with half-shut eyes to the leader, who was softly intoning the melody—thanks to Kuznetsov the *Generalissimo* had an excellent choir. Pilebeda went up to him with the slow solemnity appropriate to divine service and breathed into his ear:

"The Commander says put a jerk in it. You're dragging it out!"

Startled out of his musical trance, Kuznetsov nodded to the choir and waved his hands. The cherubims picked up speed so noticeably that the officers smiled: at lunch the padre would protest again, muttering that haste was only good in flea-hunting. Father Feoktist, too, was caught up in the quickened tempo. Stealing a sidelong glance at the Captain's ginger moustache, he imparted a livelier pace to his own droning ejaculations, and this brought a faintly ironic smile to the Commander's lips.

Yuri stood among the officers, feeling uncomfortably hot and bored. At home he had resigned himself to churchgoing as something inevitable to childhood and because he did not want to distress his mother, and at the Naval College, where they were marched to church as to the baths or the gymnasium, because he was ordered to. He had long since learned the church service by heart, and at any moment he could tell exactly how many more minutes it would last. Therefore he approved of Shiyanov's intervention. The service rushed to completion like a racing whaler to the finishing-line. Mindful of the sailors behind him, however, he crossed himself at the appropriate moments: one must not offend the sailors' religious feelings—after all they did get a certain satisfaction from prayer, as the face of Netoporchuk testified (Yuri remembered his name only too well after the underpants incident).

Netoporchuk followed the service with rapt attention, although his attitude to God was of a rather formal nature: strictly speaking, he had nothing to pray to Him for; he couldn't very well bother Him with his piddling boatswain's affairs, nor could he pray for family or friends, since he had neither. Nevertheless he endorsed the prayers with a sweeping sign of the cross and a deep sigh, gazing soulfully at the image of St. Nicholas of Myra (who was in charge of the Navy), and at St. Alexander Nevsky, the ship's patron saint, whose image hung in every mess.

The service was over. The Captain kissed the cross, his lips adroitly contriving to miss the Chaplain's hand (the sailors had to see this non-existent kiss of the humble Christian—but the padre's hand—ugh!—the devil knew when he'd washed it last!). Then, bowing to the officers, he withdrew to his regal isolation on the poop. By some mysterious means this became known immediately to the Officer of the Day, and the church pennant, a red cross on a white ground, slowly slid down the mast, signifying that smoking could be resumed aboard the ship, commands could be shouted, curses involving the Almighty and all the apostles could be hurled about, and the guard and band called out to do side honours to such persons as were entitled to them under the regulations.

The officers hastened up the ladder to get the church deck's stuffy air out of their lungs. Two destroyers, running up signals asking for permission to anchor, passed to port, their lean narrow bodies cleaving the calm sea. The flagship's mast answered back with a square yellow flag: "Permission granted." The destroyers backed water, throwing up a white foam, like dust from under the

hooves of a careering horse which is suddenly pulled up. Both anchor cables rattled simultaneously.

"Let's go up on deck and have a smoke while we're at it," the lieutenant suggested to his brother.

They walked slowly for'ard. The sailors in their clean rig, quiet and stiff-mannered with the awkwardness of Sunday idleness, made way for them. An accordion was playing on the fo'c'sle and somebody was dancing, gathering a crowd round him. According to Article 953 of the Articles of War the officers in charge "are to encourage a cheerful disposition among the crew, for which purpose various games, music and singing is permitted on shipboard and, when possible, some of the men are allowed to go ashore". No one could go ashore in this desolate bay, and so immediately after prayers the hands were piped to "song and relaxation".

The deck had dried, its dull-white surface set off sharply by the glossy runlets of pitch that filled the spaces between the planks. The grey-blue paint of the turrets and superstructures gleamed like enamel. The brass was like sunshine on fittings and hand-rails, the very steps of the companion-ladders were brassbound, the binnacles, breechblocks, and cabin scuttles were made of brass, and even in the deck planking brass slats were inserted at intervals of a pace and a half right across the deck. Brass sparkled here and there, and blazed up into dazzling little circles where it caught the sun's rays. The sun threw itself into the general festive mood, pouring all its beams upon the *Generalissimo*, which was resplendent with gleaming decks, brasswork, paint, uniforms and immaculately shaved cheeks.

The low deserted shore of the bay made a dismal contrast to the festive lustre of roadstead and ships. No shore could ever be made to look as spick and span as the sea and men-of-war.

A white puff of smoke shot out from the starboard side of the flagship followed by the sound of a gunshot. Yuri looked round.

"A salute? Why's that?"

The lieutenant looked round too. The gunshot might mean one of several things: the first round of a salute, the signal for a boat race, or a reprimand to one of the ships—depending on the whim of an admiral bored with Sunday idleness. Tone was imparted to the admiral's voice by a simultaneous flag signal, and the lieutenant looked at the mast. A striped jack-flag was creeping up—the same flag now flying at the bow of the ships—signifying, first, that they were commanded by officers not junior to post-captains, and secondly, that they were at anchor.

"You are none too observant, Midshipman Livitin. What does the jack at the foremast mean?"

"Crossing formation," Yuri came back pat, showing off his knowledge.

"Bosh! Formation at anchor?"

"You're right. At anchor—special court-martial sitting," Yuri corrected himself, laughing, then suddenly added with surprise: "Court-martial on a Sunday? What's happened there?"

"Not there, here," the lieutenant explained, making way for his brother up the ladder leading to the bridge. "Our stokers are being tried for yesterday's conduct."

"Quick work!"

"Rather. The service runs on oiled wheels. Gudkov's as pleased as punch. Shiyarov chose him to deliver these desperate criminals aboard the flagship, and he chose the right man. Gudkov loves that kind of job. He's been playing pistols ever since yesterday."

"Have they sent them off already? I didn't know..."

"Nor does any of the crew. They were not meant to know," Livitin said. He pushed open the door of the Admiral's chartroom and stopped, brows raised in surprise.

The cabin, used for chart-work during a cruise with the Admiral aboard, was occupied by sailors. They jumped up from the leather sofa, straightening their caps. Among them Livitin recognised Quartermaster Kashchenko and two other men of his own company—Tulmankov and Volkovoi. The other five or six were strangers to him:

"What's this?" he said, frowning. "What's this meeting about?"

Kashchenko coughed into his fist, and explained slowly and respectfully:

"We're painting a picture, sir. The Navigating Officer gave us leave to do it in our free time. Have a look, sir."

On the table, carefully covered with a piece of old sailcloth, stood a picture; next to it lay brushes and paints. It depicted the *Gener-alissimo*, toweringly tall and bristling with guns, cleaving her way through a sea the colour of laundry blueing, and squeezing white little sausages out of the water to represent sea foam. The stern was only roughly sketched in and showed a patch of smudgy white canvas with telltale traces of agonising quest after the proper angle for the after turret.

Kashchenko looked at the lieutenant, pencil proudly upraised between his fingers, awaiting his verdict.

"Quite a nice picture," Livitin said, smiling. "But what are the others doing here. What's Tulmankov got to do with it?"

"He's helping us to do the turret, sir. I've been at it a month of Sundays. And Marsakov here is doing a portrait of Volkovoi to send to his missus."

"The light underneath isn't right, sir," Marsakov explained with the superior air of a man who had plumbed all the mysteries of art. "I just can't get the right tone. Every time I try he kicks up a row, says I make him look like a corpse."

The sailors tittered. Livitin smiled.

"You're not smoking here, you artists, are you?"

"Oh no, sir!" the men answered in a chorus, now more at their ease.

"They won't make a mess, sir," Kashchenko interceded. "We're keeping everything spick and span. We'll clean up afterwards, the Navigating Officer let us in on that condition."

"All right. Come along, Yuri," the lieutenant said, going out. "How d'you like that—the Navigator a patron of the arts! I'll pull his leg about it at lunch."

Tulmankov shut the door firmly.

"Another bloody nark! Poking his nose everywhere!" he growled.

"You're wrong, he's not that kind," Kashchenko said, sitting down on the sofa. "He's just showing his brother around the ship, showing off."

"They're all tarred with the same brush!"

"Stow it there!" Volkovoi broke in, his smile gone. "He's right, there are too many of us here. Hop up to the bridge, Spuchin; we can have a talk without you. In case of anything, shout down."

Spuchin went out, and Kashchenko pulled the whistle plug out of the speaking-tube communicating with the bridge. The sailors sat down.

"Go on, Tulmankov," Volkovoi threw out curtly.

"That's all I've got to say, comrades," Tulmankov said. "Vailis is afraid—that's all there is to it. If you ask me, though, I say we ought to seize this opportunity. It's a chance in a million. We should start agitating the sailors right now—there are plenty of men who are dissatisfied—and on the day of the court-martial we should start an armed insurrection."

"That's going some!" Kashchenko muttered vaguely.

Tulmankov turned on him.

"Do you know what's going on in Petersburg? You don't? D'you know that the revolution is round the corner? I'll tell you what's happening all over the country, you just listen...."

He pulled a letter out from under his shirt.

"I got this yesterday from Eidemiller—you remember, the gunner, who went on the reserve last autumn? He's working at a powder factory now. . . ."

"Stand against the scuttle, Kashchenko," Volkovoi put in quietly.

"This is what he writes and asks the Committee to be informed about it: 'Disturbances have started here, the factories are going on strike. At our place the trotilite section and our percussion-cap section have struck. The printers have struck work at Yablonsky's, and have been keeping it up for over two months. A one-day protest strike has been declared in support of the Obukhov workers, whom the tsarist gang will soon be bringing to trial. It may spread all over Russia, and then you sailors may have to follow in the footsteps of the year 1905. That's how things are today, Vanya. Don't miss any opportunity in the ships to back us up. There are going to be big doings.'"

He threw Kashchenko an annihilating glance as he put the letter away.

"And we couldn't ask for a better opportunity, seeing what's happened to the stokers."

Kashchenko shook his head.

"You're starting at the wrong end, it's too late now. If only we'd known a day before they started it. They mutiny all on their own, damn 'em!"

"Because we didn't carry on any work among the stokers. Stewing in our own juice, like a bunch of conspirators!" Marsakov said angrily, jabbing a dry brush on the portrait: the scuttles were big plate-glass things, and one had to preserve appearances.

"Don't be a fool!" Volkovoi snapped. "Have you forgotten the year before last aboard the *Tsesarevich*, when you had the pants scared off you? You're wrong about the stokers, too—we've got three teams of five there, fifteen men in all. Ask Balalayev—they knew all about it."

Stoker Balalayev released his long black moustache, which he had stuck into the corner of his mouth in a fit of abstraction.

"It was just a flare-up, comrades," he droned. "Our only man in Division 4 is Venglovsky, but what can he do on his own? If only we could win over Vailis! He's a hard nut."

"He's a rotter, that Vailis of yours—he and his shoulder straps."

"Shoulder straps have got nothing to do with it, Kashchenko will tell you that."

Kashchenko grinned and shrugged his shoulder with its yellow strap as if it were a general's epaulet.

"This has stood me in good stead! How many officers' arses I had to lick to get it, but now I'm safe."

"Enough of this jabbering," Volkovoi said, and the laughter ceased.

Volkovoi surveyed them all with his sharp eyes, hidden beneath bushy eyebrows. He sat grave and stern, and obviously enjoyed the respect of the sailors, who looked up to him. Raising a large, heavy hand, he pushed his cap forward over his forehead and scratched the back of his neck.

"A flare-up it is. Balalayev is right," he said slowly, deliberating. "It's like a flood, you can't fight it, you've got to harness it downstream and direct it the way you want it to go. That's the way I look at it, comrades."

The men listened with hushed attention.

"For one thing, we missed our chance yesterday with the stokers because we were out of touch. Secondly, there's the court-martial. Tulmankov wants to use this to start a rising among the men. All right, say we start it. Say we chuck our officers overboard. Say everything goes well, and we raise the red flag. And say even that the other ships hoist it too. What will the result be?"

"A revolution," Tulmankov threw in.

Volkovoi nodded, as if this was just the answer he had been expecting, and looked up at Tulmankov.

"Yes, according to you Socialist-Revolutionaries, a revolution. But in our view—a stab in the back."

"Watery in the knees, now that you've smelt gunpowder?" Tulmankov flung at him, stung to the quick.

Volkovoi smiled wryly.

"It's you fellows who are taught to go to the gallows like heroes. But we Bolsheviks are taught not to die but to conquer. Where are you going to take the ship under the red flag? The *Potyomkin* went to Rumania, where will we go—to Sweden?"

"We'll go to Kronstadt," Tulmankov said doggedly.

"Does Kronstadt know it?"

"They'll know it when they see it, and when they know it they'll join us."

"Who'll see it, you chump? The officers at the batteries. They'll greet you with shells!"

"We'll send a wireless," Tulmankov persisted.

"Straight into the gendarme's pocket," Kashchenko added, glancing at Volkovoi with a smile.

"What's the idea, comrades?" Tulumankov cried, jumping up. "Are we to betray the revolution? Wait till uncle does it for us?"

"Sit down," Volkovoi said, pulling his sleeve. "You're not on the soap box. Shouting won't get you anywhere. Hear me out, comrades, and then have your own say. The Party Committee knows nothing about our stokers. The Party Committee has given no instructions yet for an open uprising. It'll come to them like a bolt from the blue and upset all their plans. They'll give us hell for acting on our own. Kashchenko's right—if only we'd had a day's notice the Committee could have done something about it. My proposal then is this: let them stand trial, we can't stop it now anyway. The meaning of the sentence should be brought home to the men; work up their disaffection, spread the news to the other ships, let it be known at the factories and throughout the town what things the tsarist government is up to. Inform the Committee at St. Petersburg that we're preparing an insurrection, let them fix the date for it. There."

Balalayev, who had been listening attentively, looked up.

"You're betraying our comrades, Volkovoi. The stokers are relying on us, but according to you the tougher sentences they get, the better. In that case why is the Party organising a strike to help the Obukhov workers, who are on trial? According to you, the more of them that get penal servitude, the better for the revolution? It'll make the others wilder, is that it?"

Volkovoi shook his head, as if admonishing a child.

"You're sorry for your comrades, Balalayev, but you've got your eyes on the ground. I'm sorry for them, too, maybe, but I look around and look ahead. Will they be hanged? They won't. But the Obukhov men will. That's one thing. Secondly, the Obukhov men were working for the common cause, while these took a side smack and are frittering away our strength. Thirdly, people are sent to convict prisons for nothing every day of the year. There's no harm in these stokers going to jail for the good of the revolution. The thing is. . ."

"Look out!" a sudden loud warning came from the voice-pipe.

Kashchenko snatched a pencil, Marsakov a brush; Volkovoi sat down by the portrait. Balalayev broke into a well-simulated boisterous laugh as he pointed a finger at the lop-sided funnel of the *Generalissimo* on the picture.

The door opened and Kostrushkin came in quickly.

"Look here, mates," he began, scowling and stuttering. "The bloody officers have sold us! Sidyukhin just told me—he's just

come off duty at the flagstaff—the stokers were taken off the ship during the church service. Old bastard sent the whole watch crew below—only petty officers had the deck. I tell you, mates, they're being tried already. Look at the jack-flag...."

Tulmankov brought his fist down heavily on the table, and the *Generalissimo* jumped up, streaky sea and all.

"Jesus Christ!"

The sailors made a dash for the open door.

The red flag, twice crossed out by the Tsar's hand—once with the blue St. Andrew's and then with the white St. George's cross—defaced and slashed up into eight separate red triangles, flew at the flagship's foremast, revealing to all the ships the true meaning of their sudden sailing orders, of yesterday's target practice, and today's anchorage in this desolate bay.

Displayed at the foremast, it had a grim significance. Somewhere beneath it, in the bowels of the flagship, the articles of Volume XVI of the Articles of War wriggled out of their leather covers like slippery voracious worms. They entangled the thoughts and words of the thirty-two stokers, they devoured distinctions bred by years of service, turning petty officers and first and second class stokers into "delinquency list lower ratings". These worms gnawed at the roots which fed the sailors with the sap of remote villages and towns, severing their ties with home, and out of the mash of words chewed over at the preliminary inquiry built a stout prison wall. On the church deck of the flagship a court-martial was in session.

The Admiral commanding the squadron of battleships had acted promptly. The decision was taken yesterday, when the Captain of the *Generalissimo*, nervous as a schoolboy, reported what had taken place in the waist of the ship. The Admiral listened to him, sipping strong cold tea; through the half-open drawer the Captain had a glimpse of the superior white paper of the recent secret mail. The Admiral knew a good deal more than the Captain. He had strictly confidential information from St. Petersburg, not divulged even to ships' captains, about mass demonstrations, strikes and disturbances at the factories. The Captain was concerned for his ship, the Admiral for the whole squadron. If to the Captain this spelt "riot" or "mutiny", to the Admiral it could only mean "insurrection".

Punishment had to be meted out swiftly, ably and ruthlessly. The slightest delay or miscalculation might have grave consequences: what with the rioting in St. Petersburg, the Navy had to show that it was completely free from the revolutionary taint of 1905.

It was therefore necessary to strike hard and swiftly at the

agitators. It was important to divert the men's attention from the happening of that day by sailing orders, target practice, work. Better to waste a hundred and seventy-two thousand rubles of government money on shells, coal and oil in order to isolate a dangerous ship from the rest of the squadron and hold the trial in this lonely roadstead than to hold it under the eyes of the other ships.

By the time the exercises were over, the case papers, heavily underscored and gaudily decorated with exclamation and interrogation marks (in green pencil by Lieutenant Vetkin, in blue by Sub-Lieutenant Gudkov, and in red by the Captain of the *Generalissimo*) were handed to the president of the court with laconic but exhaustive comments in the Admiral's red ink. In the evening Baron Gedroitz, captain of the flagship, summoned the other members of the court appointed by the Admiral. A man-of-war was no place for enacting the tedious comedy of civil pleadings; the conference was brief and decisive. The sentence was penned there and then by Lieutenant Von Weimarn in the Captain's cabin. All that was required to give it legal validity was to hoist the jack at the foremast and sit through a few hours on the church deck listening to the futile pleas of the culprits.

The jack was hoisted soon after the church service.

Naval flags are extremely expressive. Till ten o'clock the church-pennant hung at the mast—a red cross on a white field, the cross a reminder that divine service was in progress aboard the ship. At eight minutes past ten the jack took its place. Its red field, sectioned off by two crosses, bespoke the wise policy of the government: Religion and the Government likewise split up the population of the Empire into a multitude of sections—the Army, the Navy, factory hands, peasants, subject peoples, the heterodox; Government and Religion crisscrossed the Empire like the rays of the jack-flag, slashing it apart with knouts, machine-gun sprays, and signs of the cross to keep the people from joining forces.

The indictment opened with the names of the court members being read out. Titles glittered like epaulets, ranks like the bayonets of the escort. The thirty-two stokers listened, blinking. A faint current of air stirred the paper in the hands of Lieutenant Von Weimarn, who was acting as clerk. It seemed to be squirming with shame, as if trying to throw off the web of lies spun around it in that delicate feminine handwriting.

"...and Matvei Ezofatov, Stoker 1st Class, when remonstrated with by Commander Shiyarov, shouted out insolently: 'Hit the

damn'd bullies', whereupon Karl Vailis, Petty Officer 2nd Class, wanted to strike Commander Shiyarov, but was prevented from doing so by Khlebnikov, Petty Officer 1st Class, who caught his hand...."

Vailis pursed his mouth and glanced at Khlebnikov. The latter sat staring at the moving lips of the lieutenant, and each time his name was uttered, glanced quickly at the president, as if trying to guess what the latter thought of his conduct.

Vailis smiled ironically. The lieutenant was reading sheer nonsense. Everything would be cleared up in a moment, when the stokers were cross-examined. Shiyarov, Greve and Khlebnikov had been scared into making false statements, and all the thirty-two stokers would confirm this. Thirty-two against three—there was nothing to worry about.

Ezofatov listened sullenly and attentively. He stirred heavily on the bench, his back touching the guard's rifle. The place was full of guards—they stood in the doorways, at the hatches, and at the backs of the accused. They listened to the charge with fear and pity, and avoided the eyes of the stokers, as much as to say: "You're in for it, mates, and there's nothing you can do about it."

Flag Captain Baron Gedroitz, president of the court, breathed heavily. At every intake of breath the crease on his white tunic smoothed out, stirring the Order of Vladimir, 3rd Class, on his chest—the Baron was asthmatic. The names which Lieutenant Von Weimarn was reading out were not associated in his mind with the sailors to whom they belonged. The stokers were part of that faceless indistinguishable mass of which he caught occasional glimpses at Sunday inspections and at "Colours".

He scanned the faces of the prisoners with detached curiosity. Just sailors as sailors go—like the thousand others under his command. Ordinary good-natured peasant faces. Which of them was Ezofatov?

Baron Gedroitz mentally pictured one of these men raising his hand to hit him, while the others roared threateningly, and he immediately agreed with the Admiral's sharply worded comment: "Scandalous!" He jotted down a number of questions, designed to bring out a full picture of the mutiny, and waiting till the indictment was concluded, he proceeded to take the evidence.

Before dinner a light breeze sprang up. The jack-flag at the foremast fluttered, starting the old and cruel game of the white and blue rays with the red field. They hid in the folds of the cloth, turning the dismembered red field for a brief moment into the semblance of a true red flag, only to straighten out the next moment

with a faint snap like a distant shot and resume their domineering position. The red sections struggled hard to unite, but in vain. They glowed in the sunbeams, like bleeding gums breaking their teeth on the steel bars of prison windows.

Beneath the jack-flag, on the forecastle, groups of sailors gathered in obedience to the whistled command to "sing and make merry". The groups condensed into a solid mass of blue collars, which was immediately broken up again by the tunics of the warrant officers—white as the straight ray on the jack. Here and on the mess-deck officers passed to and fro with great frequency, each of them followed, as if by accident, by two or three petty officers.

Vailis, pale-faced, looked at Greve. What was the man saying?

"Yes, sir. I distinctly heard Stoker Ezofatov's voice, saying: 'Hit the damn'd bullies.' The Commander had no option but to..." (Lieutenant Greve fingered his clipped moustache hesitatingly) "but to quickly avoid the threatening gesture of Petty Officer Vailis."

"Thank you," Baron Gedroitz said, indicating with a slight bow that he had no more questions.

"May I draw the attention of the court," Greve continued agitatedly, "that the excited state the men were in prevented me from taking drastic steps of my own to deal with the situation. I assumed that the authority of the Commander would bring them to their senses, and I tried to make things easier for them."

"The court appreciates your motives," said Baron Gedroitz. "Second-Class Stoker Ezofatov. What made you shout out your threat?"

Lieutenant Von Weimarn struggled hard to write down the incoherent speech, which was choked back into the man's throat by impotent rage, the guards' bayonets and the Articles of War. The light pen, which had caught the smooth speech of Greve and Shiyanov on the wing, was baffled by the awkward stumbling-block of sailor speech, which got stuck in endless inarticulate phrases. He raised his left eyebrow, pen hovering over the paper, then swiftly caught the gist of the speech in the delicate net of his feminine handwriting:

"Stoker Ezofatov explains that what he said was: 'Hitting a man for nothing, the bullies.'"

He leaned over towards his neighbour:

"Trying to twist out of it, the cunning devil!"

Baron Salza the First smiled non-committally. He was in a false position. He was not a lawyer, and had hastily read through Volume XVI of the Articles of War only the day before. Now he was

to defend this gang of mutineers. Baron Salza saw quite clearly that the sailor was dodging, trying to give his phrase a defensive instead of offensive twist. But this might help the defence. He insisted on witnesses being called to ascertain the exact wording.

Von Weimarn looked encouragingly into the devoted eyes of Khlebnikov and nodded his head. Khlebnikov clearly and smoothly confirmed the charge formulated by Weimarn, slightly overdoing it in his zeal. "Yes, Ezofatov had shouted: 'Hit the damn'd bullies, ditch 'em.'"

Next the petty officers, whom Greve had posted round the stokers, were called to give evidence. They sprang to their feet and answered briskly.

"Did you hear the shout: 'Hit the damn'd bullies'?"

"Yessir!"

"You needn't shout so loud. . . . Are you sure the words weren't: 'Hitting a man for nothing, the bullies'?"

"Can't tell you, sir."

"Then 'Hit the damn'd bullies' is correct?"

"Quite correct, sir. Meaning you damn'd bullies, the officers!"

Von Weimarn covered up a smile with his hand: the answer sounded respectful but stupid. He whispered to his neighbour:

"Your goose is cooked, Baron! The facts are against you. I wouldn't let you handle even a divorce case."

The boatswain's mate stood before the table, bearded and calm. He listened attentively to the questions and answered readily.

"Did you see Vailis raise his hand to hit the Commander?"

"I beg to report, sir, that at first, when he threatened to hit him, the whole caboodle crowded round him, if you know what I mean, and the Commander, he mizzled off—"

"Hold on. What's the caboodle?"

"The stokers, sir."

"Who did they crowd round?"

"Round the Commander, sir."

"So you confirm that they actually threatened violence?"

"Yes, sir. He threatened him first, though. . . ."

Von Weimarn was puzzled by this mixture of pronouns, but the picture was quite clear. The evidence confirmed that of Greve and Shiyonov, confirmed the conclusion drawn from the enquiry by Lieutenant Vetkin, confirmed the charge recorded by Von Weimarn.

The examination of Vailis was postponed till after lunch.

The prisoners ate at the same table their judges had sat at; the red cloth was removed, and with it all the pomp of the court-martial.

The officers of the *Generalissimo* were invited to the wardroom. Greve was dragged to the piano, and he started playing with assurance and gaiety. At mess various incidents of mutiny were recalled, which had ended less satisfactorily, and there was a good deal of laughter at the crass stupidity of the answer: "Meaning you damn'd bullies, the officers."

At lunch in the wardroom the Admiral enquired what progress the trial was making.

"I trust you won't mince matters when passing sentence, Baron," he said, snapping shut his cigarette-case. "I have good grounds for urging harsh and drastic action. When will you be through?"

"Probably by dinner, Your Excellency," Baron Gedroitz answered as he helped himself to salad.

"Very good! Sub-Lieutenant Shakhovskoi, the signal can be hoisted after lunch."

The flag lieutenant bowed. After lunch the ship made her pennants. The destroyers got up steam to get under way at six o'clock. Two toylike launches put off and made for the flagship; their coxswains called on the Admiral for instructions.

Vailis's evidence, from the very outset, was received with ironical incredulity. His faulty Russian made his statements sound far-fetched and improbable. He was the first to tell the court how Chief Petty Officer Seryozhin had sent the stokers to the upper deck in their work blues, and how, for that very reason, they considered Shiyanov's order to take their names unfair.

"Keep to the point," Baron Gedroitz interrupted, breathing hard and slowly—he always had trouble with his breath after a meal. "The court wants to know what happened during the mutiny, not before it."

"I believe it's the court's business to hear both sides of the case," Vailis said firmly. "The one to blame is Chief Petty Officer Seryozhin. He said we could safely double up in our blue trousers."

Baron Gedroitz flushed and frowned.

"Answer the court's questions. Why did you raise your hand at the Commander?"

"If you were going to get your face punched you'd raise your arm to cover it too."

"I'm not asking you what I would do!" the Baron snapped, and the guards stiffened to attention. "Do you deny that you raised your hand against the Commander while standing in the ranks?"

"I raised my hand to my face," Vailis repeated doggedly. "Get-

ting a punch in the jaw is no great pleasure, and besides, it's against the law."

"So you want us to believe that the Commander went away for no reason whatever, that no one threatened him?"

Vailis shrugged his shoulders.

"Ask the Commander. I don't know what made him run away from the sailors. Maybe he had business to attend to."

The stokers smiled. No more questions were asked of Vailis.

By four o'clock the stokers found themselves divided. A new line in the evidence was struck out by First Class Stoker Drankin.

Obviously the court was going to hand out severe sentences, and Drankin had only another year to serve. In the Chernigov Gubernia he had a small farmstead and an orchard. His wife ran the farm as thriftily as he did; the other day she had written him that the priest, who was moving to town, had sold her his land and his horse at a bargain price. The farm was growing and there was no sense in exchanging it for a prison. Drankin's beady frightened eyes peered cunningly at the judges until it finally dawned on him what the Gold Braid wanted of him. He was the first of the thirty-two stokers to testify that Vailis and Ezofatov had persuaded the men not to dismiss, and it was they who were responsible for the whole row.

There was a stir among the members of the court. Baron Salza at last found a direct object of defence.

Drankin gave the cue to three boy stokers. They had joined the ship a month before and were still living in mortal fear of breaking their naval oath, a fear instilled into them by the petty officers at the depot. The president's questions, cunningly worded, were answered to his complete satisfaction.

There was another group of five men, who had been on the left flank. Endless interrogation, the conflicting evidence, and the whole tedious procedure of the court had quite bamboozled them. They began to believe that Ezofatov had really shouted: "Hit the damn'd bullies!" They had not seen Vailis threaten the Commander, but agreed that he might have done so. The right flank was very sore at being placed in report, and it was from there that the phrase reached them, passed down the line in a whisper when the flag was being hoisted: "Don't dismiss, mates, we'll make a complaint; why should we be punished for nothing."

The men's resistance was broken. A crack had appeared in the solid wall of evidence which the thirty-two had given to Lieutenant Vetkin at the preliminary enquiry. Into this crack Baron Gedroitz inserted the thin knife of hope and widened it with light careful

probing that held the promise of acquittal. The wall collapsed, leaving a wreckage of eight or nine stones that no longer presented an obstacle.

Towards dinner-time the court retired to consider the verdict.

The flagship's signalmen handled the semaphore like conjurers. They wigwagged their swift message across the roadstead, and the clumsy letters formed on the signal-blank:

"Pack kit except numbers 1224, 1234, 1274, 1304, Shiyarov."

In the wardroom of the *Generalissimo* the Gunnery Lieutenant whom Shiyarov had left in charge shook the backgammon dice in one hand while he read the message. He rose heavily from his chair, saying to his partner:

"Double six. I'll go on with the game in a moment."

Summoned to his cabin, Warrant Officer Ovseyets nodded understandingly. Then, together with the Chief Petty Officer of Company 8, the Senior Storekeeper and two stokers acting as witnesses, he went to Mess No. 20.

The mess was empty and tidied up. On the doors of the lockers were the names of the thirty-two stokers. Breathing hard into his moustache Ovseyets made a chalk mark on four doors and threw open the rest. The stokers' belongings were thrown out onto the deck and sorted out, the uniforms being inventoried and returned to store, while the personal effects were put away in the men's boxes and sealed.

The court proceedings ran their grim course. They spoke the leaden-toned language of the Articles of War. They rustled the sheets of the preliminary enquiry and statements of evidence amid a glitter of epaulets, titles, and bayonets, and the cold lustre of martial law. The sailors' uniforms were wet with sweat, their throats dry, as the drift of the sentence, impassively intoned by Baron Gedroitz, gradually dawned upon them.

"Having heard the evidence in the case of the thirty-two lower ratings of the battleship *Generalissimo Count Suvorov of Rymnik* listed below who are charged under Articles 74 and 104 of Volume XVI of the Articles of War . . ."

Christian name, surname, province, district . . . married or single . . . previous convictions, if any . . . time served. . .

"... have been found guilty in that, having agreed among themselves on the 24th day of May 1914 to disobey the order of a superior officer who awarded punishment for having appeared on the upper deck improperly dressed, and while being in the ranks and more than eight in number, they declared first to Petty Officer Khlebnikov, and then to the Officer of the Day, Lieutenant Greve, and finally

to Commander Shiyanov, that they demanded the punishment be cancelled and the Captain of the ship be called immediately to hear their complaint, thus committing an offence under articles . . .

"... The court finds that the above-mentioned unruly conduct was likely to have a damaging effect on discipline in the service. It also finds that on being ordered by the Commander to dismiss, 2nd Class Stoker Ezofatov incited the lower ranks to open mutiny by shouting: 'Hit the damn'd bullies!' and incited them to beat up the Commander. The Court finds that 2nd Class Stoker Petty Officer Vailis, neglecting the duty imposed upon him by his rank, not only failed to assist his superior officer in suppressing the mutiny, but on the contrary raised his hand against him with the intention of striking the first blow. The rest of the men, listed above, despite the repeated command, 'Attention!' and the remonstrances of Commander Shiyanov and Lieutenant Greve, left the ranks and crowded round the Commander. . . ."

Semaphore flags fluttered on the bridges. Brief commands, cryptically worded, flew from ship to ship, like gulls before a storm, low and swift, skimming the water with a sharp wing. The flag lieutenant standing at the boat's side like a provincial fire-brigade chief—hand on hip in a proud dashing pose—had made three rush calls on the destroyers and two on the *Generalissimo*.

The destroyers belched smoke as they quivered under idling engines. In the office of the *Generalissimo* the Senior Storekeeper and the Chief Writer, ill-tempered from the heat and haste, were finishing writing out the allowance certificates for the twenty-eight lower ratings who were being written off the ship's books on the Commodore's orders.

Yuri Livitin looked into the wardroom; it was empty. Something unusual was afoot—even an unpractised eye could tell that. Officers loitered about the decks, disappearing every now and then down the hatchways. Nikolai had spent an hour and a half in Sub-Lieutenant Morozov's cabin, and came out whistling. Yuri knew that this, with him, was a sign of suppressed agitation and anger. He could not get him to talk. After the third oppressive pause, Yuri was stung into remarking:

"What have I got to do with it, I'd like to know? Something's happened here, and I'm to blame. . . ."

He got up, feeling utterly miserable. The sense of pride at having been so quickly accepted into the family of officers suddenly dropped away from him together with his sense of grownupness. A boy, a young cub—that's all he was. He was not to be trusted with

so much as a hint of that grave and fascinatingly sinister secret that weighed on the minds of Nikolai and all the other officers.

"Yes, you've come at a bad time," Livitin acquiesced, carefully smoothing out a crease in his tunic. "It hasn't been a lucky day. But for you, I'd probably go and get as drunk as a cadet."

Yuri sat down on the edge of the bunk. Resentment had given way to sharp curiosity. Nikolai perturbed! The thought was uncanny, intriguing, as if something frightful and unexpected were about to happen, like a pistol shot in a ballroom. The battleship was at last showing her true face, which had been kept hidden from both the Naval College and the shore. The stern duty of a naval officer was revealed for a fleeting instant behind the drawn veil of gay and gracious living. And this was what life had in store for Yuri, a life of which Nikolai had told him nothing yet. It was no subject for jokes and anecdotes. Yuri felt a sudden surge of devotion and heroism.

"What's in the wind?" he asked with studied carelessness.

"Nothing. Who put the idea into your head?" Nikolai answered, beginning to whistle again.

Yuri stood up, flushing.

"At least, perhaps you will be kind enough to tell me how I am to get to St. Petersburg from here?" he said coldly. "My leave will soon be up."

The Lieutenant stole a glance at him and burst out laughing.

"You're so scandalously young, Yuri," he said in his usual bantering tone. "Hug your illusions till you grow up to see life as it is. You're right about going ashore, though. Wait here and I'll fix up something for you."

He went out. A dreary sense of loneliness and alarm came over Yuri. He felt a sudden desire to go home. Not back to the *Aurora*, to the Naval College, but home—to the settled peace of an ordinary room.

Yuri looked round the cabin. Bright and attractive, it now seemed to him a trap. Only the thin bulkheads separated him from the rest of the ship; behind them stalked fear.

A fear none the less real for being nameless, vague and undefinable. It crept into the usual careless gaiety of the officers' conversation. It lurked in Nikolai's whistling and his moody silences. Fear surrounded the cabin, broke into it together with the hum of the ventilators, which expelled the foul air from the crew's quarters, and like that hum, it had its roots there.

"Nonsense," Yuri said to himself as he sat down at the table, then suddenly started: a steely blue eye glanced up at him from the half-open drawer.

Yuri had always regarded a revolver as a sort of abstraction. Death conventionalised, the symbol of death rather than its instrument. To a man of society a small Browning was as indispensable and useless an article of attire as a necktie or a walking stick. But this Browning was different. The alarm and terror that stalked the ship were here materialised, given shape and weight. Yuri picked it up with a feeling of repugnance.

It was an ugly thing to find aboard a man-of-war. Ships did battle with guns and torpedo-tubes, but this short-range feeble toy was obviously not intended for use in a naval engagement.

"May I?" a voice at the door made Yuri look up.

Sub-Lieutenant Morozov stood in the doorway, obviously not himself. He was pale and sombre, evidently the worse for drink.

"Yes, my brother will be back in a minute," Yuri said, inwardly wincing.

Morozov staggered into the cabin and dropped into a chair.

"Clod!" Yuri thought contemptuously. "I wonder what Nikolai sees in him?"

Morozov made no attempt at conversation. He sat there brooding as if the cabin were his own. The silence was becoming oppressive. Greve or Vetkin would have broken it with a jest and tossed the glittering fragments in easy conversation. But this fellow was dumb! Yuri got angry.

"Excuse me, I must leave you," he said in his iciest tone, getting up and laying the Browning on the bunk; he could not reach the table as Morozov was in the way.

"That's all right," Morozov said indifferently and lapsed into silence again.

Yuri went into the wardroom. Greve and Vetkin were playing a four-handed "cat's waltz" on the piano. Vetkin stumbled over the simple tune, and Greve laughed at him so heartily that Yuri couldn't help smiling.

The sense of alarm was allayed here. The wardroom was living its full evening life. Father Feoktist, hands folded on his paunch, listened grinning to the sub-lieutenants' gay chatter. The gunnery lieutenant rattled the dice, and a group of officers on the corner sofa had dropped into their evening conversation. The bronze figure of a fisherman held his lantern over them with a melancholy air, its light dancing in the coloured liqueur-glasses.

Yuri sighed. Life, evidently, had shaken down again, and he had no desire to leave.

His brother, who was sitting on the sofa engaged in conversation with Shiyanov, rose to meet him.

"Well, you can get ready," he said. "The boat will be here in half an hour. The Commander has fixed you up on the *Bditelny*—she is going straight to Kronstadt. Say good-bye to him and thank him."

Yuri went up to Shiyanov. The latter was lounging in a corner of the sofa, his narrow head thrown far back, and his long bony fingers beating time to the "cat's waltz". His wing collar stood out cool and immaculate—after the court-martial he had changed his linen, and with it, his mood.

"Allow me, sir, to thank you for the cordial welcome which I have received aboard the *Generalissimo*," Yuri said, bowing, and inwardly congratulating himself on the elegant urbanity of phrase. Shiyanov got up at once—naval hospitality is not governed by rank. He uttered a few courteous platitudes, shook Yuri's hand, and sank back onto the sofa, showing a dazzling glimpse of collar wings.

Yuri went over to the piano. Lieutenant Greve stopped playing and took his leave of Yuri with his usual bland suavity.

Vetkin was more genial.

"Good-bye, midshipman, bright hope of the Russian Navy," he said. His eyes twinkled as he shook Yuri's hand. "You're not angry with me, are you?"

Yuri blushed hotly at the memory of that night on deck. This was worse, though: officers were looking on this time, not bluejackets. The twinkle in Vetkin's eye looked dangerous. Was he going to make cruel sport of him again by repeating in his charmingly witty manner the shameful story of how the midshipman had come out on deck in his mauve pants and shirt?

"What's the secret between you two?" Livitin senior asked. "What is it, Yuri?"

Yuri mumbled vaguely. Vetkin laughed.

"Don't be jealous, Livi. Your brother and I share a little secret. I swear your family honour is not involved."

He pumped Yuri's hand.

"No, really, don't be angry please. Life's a huge joke, isn't it?"

Yuri felt relieved. The lieutenant's intimate friendly tone could not but tickle his vanity. It was impossible to be angry with Vetkin.

"So it is. I didn't think so at the time, though."

They both chuckled knowingly. Yuri bowed to the other officers and walked to the door accompanied by the rollicking tune of the "cat's waltz". In the passageway the lieutenant asked his smiling brother what Vetkin had been hinting at.

Confession was easy now, and Yuri related his adventure. Nikolai laughed heartily.

"He's a witty chap, Vetkin! He can turn almost anything into a good joke. This should be a lesson to you not to moon about on the upper deck improperly dressed," Livitin said as he opened his cabin door. Suddenly he stopped, his tall figure blocking the doorway.

"Idiot! Put that thing down at once!"

He strode forward, and Yuri could now see the pale face of Morozov, who replaced the revolver on the table with a shaking hand.

"Take a drink of water. You ought to be ashamed of yourself!" the lieutenant said, and Yuri's jealous ear caught the warm note in his voice. It was in such a tone of voice that Nikolai used to console his own childish griefs.

He should have tactfully withdrawn, but curiosity prevailed. Yuri, with an air of decision, stepped into the cabin, shut the door, and pouring out a glass of water, held it out to Morozov. He was determined to be in the thick of things and miss nothing.

"Well, what is it, old chap?" the lieutenant said. "Lock the door, Yuri, this is a bit of high drama. You look ill, Petro-Petruchio, what's the matter?"

Morozov raised to him his round boyish face. Pale, snub-nosed, it twitched piteously. Behaving like a schoolboy, Yuri thought, for all that he'd had over two years as sub-lieutenant.

Morozov jerked his head in the direction of the table. The lieutenant picked up a sheet of paper lying there, scanned it, and whistled.

"Humph," he muttered, putting the paper down again. "Pretty tough, that! But it's absolutely none of your doing!"

"I'm a rotter, Livitin, and I ought to blow my brains out," Morozov said despairingly, and it was difficult to tell by his tone whether he was in sober earnest or simply drunk. Yuri snatched up the revolver and laid it on the bunk out of Morozov's reach. Having thus asserted his right to interfere, he picked up the paper.

The orderly violet letters looked coldly official and inexpressive. Yuri scanned them hurriedly, the while he lent an ear to the conversation, for fear that his brother would calmly take the paper away from him. The meaning of that day's alarm was brought home to him as he read the court's sentence.

The special court-martial, appointed by order of the Commander-in-Chief of the Battle Brigade on May 24, consisting of members . . .

"What do you mean by 'rotter'? Explain yourself," Livitin said, setting down on the bunk.

... finds them guilty in that having agreed among themselves did disobey the order of a superior officer ...

"I ought to have known that Shiyanov and Greve would throw all the blame on the men to save their own faces! I told you the trial would be a serious one."

... being in the ranks and more than eight in number ...

"Yes, the sentence is pretty cynical," Livitin agreed. "But what have you got to do with it?"

... the court finds that the above-mentioned insubordinate conduct was likely to have a damaging effect on discipline in the Service. It also finds ...

"Not cynical, monstrous! Mean! That fool of yours Seryozhin chivied them up on deck, and because of some blue trousers..."

... hereby sentences: 2nd Class Petty Officer Karl Vailis and 2nd Class Stoker Matvei Ezofatov to deprivation of all rights and privileges ...

"Not because of blue trousers, but because of the consequences," Livitin amended. "Because of their disorderly conduct."

... and to detention in the convict gangs for a term of five years

"But the consequences were due to Greve's and Shiyanov's cowardice! Why didn't Greve send for me at once? I could have settled it all quietly. The men trusted me ... up till then! And now..."

Morozov made a hopeless gesture.

"They overstepped the limits. A complaint in the ranks, as you know, is not settled by the Company Commander," Livitin said.

... 1st Class Stokers Boris Afonin, Antip Vilchenko, Dominique Venglovsky ... twenty men in all ...

"Who are you trying to persuade? Yourself?" Morozov said, swinging round in his chair. "Disciplinary limits have nothing to do with it—the fact is we're afraid of the sailors..."

"Steady there!" the lieutenant said, raising his hand. "You're skating on thin ice!"

...to be transferred to disciplinary battalions or companies for a term of eighteen months...

"Yes, we're afraid!" Morozov repeated vehemently. "That's the whole trouble. In every step of theirs we see mutiny, insurrection, revolution. And we drive them to mutiny ourselves by our senseless cruelty! Shiyanov, Greve, I, you..."

"Please count me out," Livitin said. "I do my duty, and that's all that concerns me."

"Duty! Just a screen!"

...2nd Class Stokers Pavel Yefremov, Pavel Kuznetsov ... Yegor Sovetov—to eight months naval prison...

"You can't use duty as a screen, Nikolai! Duty's a grim idol of our own creation and we sacrifice the men to it..."

"Now we've come to accusations," the lieutenant said mockingly, sitting back comfortably. "You set yourself very high standards, Sub-Lieutenant Morozov. It's quite a pleasure!"

...1st Class Stoker Philip Drankin and apprentice stokers ... are acquitted.

Morozov winced painfully. "Why do you always pretend to be a cynic, Nikolai? Don't I know perfectly well that in your heart of hearts you agree with these accusations?"

"I do, and I also fully share the soul tragedy you are living through," the lieutenant said, tapping the end of his cigarette. "A tragedy quite in the manner of old Stanyukovich: the sundowner of a commander and a noble-hearted impulsive sub-lieutenant. The latter is tormented by the prevailing injustice, and—how does it go?—'pale of countenance, with burning eyes', he went up to the Commander. 'Allow me to tell you, sir, that you are a cad,' he said in a voice deep with emotion. The officers gasped, Shiyanov smiled wanly. The sub-lieutenant slowly raised his hand, dropped it on the Commander's cheek, and ran out of the wardroom, sobbing. The same evening, naturally, the sub-lieutenant shoots himself—but I would ask him not to do it in my cabin and not with my revolver."

"You're always joking," Morozov said dejectedly, "but I feel rotten. It's a mean, dirty business! I'll hand in my resignation!"

"Not until you've served out your schooling. You have another three years to go, I believe?" the lieutenant said mockingly. "After that I'd advise you to take a job as rural schoolmaster."

"Good-bye," Morozov said, starting to his feet, red and angry.

"Sit down and keep your hair on," the lieutenant said, pushing him back into his seat. "You're not going anywhere in this state. You're likely to go berserk and punch the Commander in the jaw, then throw yourself overboard in a fit of heroic passion. I know you—you'd like me to press that hard-thinking head of yours to my bosom and go into raptures over your sufferings. 'Ah, ah, what a noble mind!' Sit down and take a cold shower. Yuri, give him a cigarette."

Yuri laid the sheet of paper down on the table.

"You know what, Nikolai," he said, passing the cigarette case, "I think there is something wrong about it. The sentence is such a savage one. It worries me too."

"Another budding champion of justice for you!" the lieutenant remarked to Morozov. "You're a pair of blind puppies, the two of you, and I'm damned if I know why I'm wasting my time on you. But one is my brother, the other my friend. So listen to me and soak in a little information."

Yuri sat down on the edge of the bunk.

"First of all, let's dot our i's to know where we stand: Shiyarov's a coward, Greve's a heartless careerist, and both of them, of course, are rotters. But that is not the point. What, in your opinion, is the Captain—is he a rotter too?"

"N-no," Morozov said uncertainly. "He got the whole story from Shiyarov."

"Your logic makes him a rotter too—he should have spoken to the men, but he didn't."

"That's true," Yuri said.

"Glad to hear it. And the Admiral?"

Morozov made a hopeless gesture.

"That one never set eyes on the stokers. He only saw the account of the enquiry fabricated by Vetkin and Gudkov according to Shiyarov's recipe. On the strength of that enquiry I wasn't called to give evidence—Vetkin wangled that cleverly."

"Vetkin and Gudkov go down on your list of rotters, then. So does His Excellency, for that matter. He could have gone into the matter, couldn't he?"

"He could," Yuri agreed.

"My brother's a more consistent liberal than you are, old chap. Well then, who's not a rotter? Only Sub-Lieutenant Morozov? Not at all. He kept silent instead of kicking up a shindy."

"That's just it," Morozov sighed dejectedly.

"Please include me in your rogues' gallery," Livitin said with a bow. "I knew all about the incident and could have asked for a boat. My evidence at the court-martial would have created a sensation. But I didn't do it; ergo, I'm a rotter."

"You said it," Yuri giggled.

The lieutenant bowed again.

"Thank you. And so it works out that all the officers are rotters, and the sailors their meek victims. But where does that lead us? Assuming that all the officers were not rotters—that Lieutenant Greve had heard out the men's complaint, that Commander Shiyanov had cancelled his punishment, that Sub-Lieutenant Morozov had preserved his innocence, that the Captain had given his blessing to these good works, and that the Admiral had invited all these champions of fair play to a dinner party. . . . What an Arcadian dream!"

The lieutenant sighed in his turn.

"And in due time news of this Arcadia would reach the ears of the Minister of Marine. And his Lordship would call for his pink paper and write a message of congratulation to the assembled banqueters, saying: 'To mark the occasion of the restoration of peace afloat and of complete concord between officers and men, I order the Admiral, the Captain, the Commander, Lieutenant Greve, Officer of the Day, and Sub-Lieutenant Morozov, Company Commander, to be tried by court-martial for slackening of authority.' And up would go the jack again, and destroyers would carry these gentlemen off to Kronstadt. And with them—mark my words, old chap—would go the stokers who lodged their complaint, 'being in the ranks, and more than eight in number'. . . ."

"So all that matters is that dead figure Eight?" Morozov said angrily. "Suppose there'd been seven of them?"

"Then nothing would have happened," laughed Livitin. "There would have been no mutiny. A mutiny occurs only when eight or more men are involved."

"Nonsense!" Yuri protested.

"Not nonsense, but the laws of the Russian Empire," the lieutenant said sternly, then grinned. "Do you want to exist, Sub-Lieutenant Morozov? I hope you do. Then be good enough to keep the laws and not tamper with them. The state structure that has a single law removed from it will collapse in a heap of ruins. Therein lies the real strength of that mystic number Eight!"

"You say you're not a revolutionary," Morozov said calmly. His intoxication had passed together with his excitement; apparently, the one had fed the other. "In my opinion you ought to be reported

to the gendarme department. If I understood you correctly, you suggest changing the whole system of laws in the Russian Empire?"

Lieutenant Livitin carefully knocked off the ash of his cigarette and nodded.

"You're quick on the uptake, Pyotr. You've caught on to the idea."

"That means a revolution has to be made?"

"For those who are troubled by these laws—yes."

"What about you?"

"They don't trouble me. Or you either, for that matter. Or him," the lieutenant nodded in Yuri's direction. "They won't trouble him. They trouble those whom they oppress."

"Meaning the sailors?"

"Not only the sailors," Livitin said, stretching his legs more comfortably. "Approximately seven- or eight-tenths of the population of this flourishing land of ours."

Morozov's eyes flew to the door.

"Then the revolution is inevitable?"

"As inevitable as fate," the lieutenant said.

Yuri, who had been listening to this with a frown, at last exploded:

"Following your logic, one must become a revolutionary, otherwise one will be crushed by this inevitable revolution!"

"Everyone to his own taste," the lieutenant smiled. "Personally, I'm not particularly struck on that profession; too troublesome, and smacks of the chain gang. Besides, nothing is more disgusting than the wretched figure of your Russian revolutionary intellectual with his pamphlets, his meetings, his 'going among the people', his burning eyes, his noble speeches about the poor suffering underdog—in a word, all-out revolution up to the first well-paid civil service job or the first fee of a gainful lawyer's occupation. And then—enlightened liberalism, hypocritical outpourings. Don't be angry, Petruchio, you're not the first man, crushed by the world's injustice, to snatch at the revolver in tragic despair. Eventually all these well-meaning suicides become reconciled to the world's injustice when they settle into a government job and get a decent salary. Measly tykes!"

"Yet many of them have gone to the gallows for the cause of the revolution," Morozov broke in hotly. "Are they measly tykes too? For all your cynicism you can say nothing to belittle the heroic deeds of the Narodniks, the Decembrists, Lieutenant Schmidt. . . ."

"Put on the soft pedal, old chap, this is a man-of-war, you know," Livitin said gravely. "I'm not talking about them. You can't stop

people from making a useless sacrifice if they are bent on it—useless, because the revolution won't be made by them anyway. The revolution will come from below, without any of your revolutionary heroics. And it won't be at all what you imagined it to be. I only hope to God it doesn't come about in our generation."

"If you can see the coming revolution so clearly," Morozov inserted sarcastically, "then be consistent—crush it to keep your generation safe."

"Read Mr. Pushkin's *Story of the Pugachov Rebellion*, and look the revolution in the face. You will find it terrible and destructive. Pugachov was a clever chap, he went to the bottom of things. With him it was 'Down with the landowners and masters, we'll sort things out afterwards!' You know what a tremendous following this motto won him, what an elemental force it was. How are you going to check that force? Not with that, surely?"

He tossed the pistol in his hand, then flung it on the bunk.

"The self-consolation of idiots! Nine bullets for nine hundred muzhiks—simple arithmetic! We leave it to the Shiyanovs and Greves to believe in the power of that talisman. Life's problem, my young friends, is not to check the millstones of history by sticking your finger into them, but to find your place among those millstones. Every grain that tries to rear its head will be ground into flour. But the grain that finds its little hole and lies there quietly without kicking, will roll along safely. There you have the philosophy of non-resistance, revised and amplified by Lieutenant Livitin. Open the door, Yuri, that'll be the messenger reporting the arrival of your picket-boat."

It was not. In the doorway stood Netoporchuk, red with agitation and anticipatory embarrassment.

"What is it, Boatswain?" Livitin asked.

"Allow me to explain, sir."

"Go ahead."

"Allow me to apologise, sir, for mistaking your brother, the midshipman, sir," Netoporchuk began, hoarse-voiced and blinking, "It was like this, sir. He turned out in the night to go to the lavatory improperly dressed, if you know what I mean. . . ."

"I know," Livitin said. Netoporchuk shifted his weight from one foot to the other.

"Will you be so kind, sir, as to excuse my stupid mistake. I didn't notice his pants until afterwards, sir, and then I saw that they belonged to a gentleman. I'd never have dared to—"

"Apologise to the midshipman, not to me," the lieutenant said, avoiding his glance. Morozov, too, lowered his head and busied himself smoothing out the corners of the sheet of paper.

His face an agonising scarlet, Netoporchuk addressed himself to Yuri.

"I'm sorry for the stupid mistake, sir," he said earnestly, looking up at the midshipman.

Yuri reddened. Here was a grown man, serious and sad, looking into his eyes with that hangdog expression. He felt ashamed and disgusted, as if someone were kissing his boot and he was trying to pull his foot away.

"That's all right. . . . I've forgotten all about it. . ." Yuri mumbled.

"May I go, sir?" Netoporchuk asked in a tone of relief.

"Yes," the lieutenant nodded, reaching for the cigarettes.

Netoporchuk went out. An awkward silence lingered in the cabin. All three avoided each other's eyes. The lieutenant slowly lit his cigarette; the match had almost burnt out when he flicked it into the ash-tray. Sub-Lieutenant Morozov started to his feet.

"How mean it all is . . . how disgusting. . ." he said, spitting the words out with savage emphasis as he folded the sentence sheet in two, then in four, in eight, in sixteen with trembling fingers. "Hideous, organised imbecility. Nikolai, how can you—"

"Come in!" the lieutenant shouted. Morozov broke off, fumbling for his pocket.

"Boat alongside, sir," the call boy reported, drawing himself up stiffly in the doorway.

"All right, run along," the lieutenant answered, getting up. "Well, Yuri, let's kiss and say good-bye. As for you, Petruchio, please don't leave my cabin. You're better off here."

A feeling of sadness came over Yuri in the boat. He sat all alone in the stern cabin, listening to the steady hum of the engine. The *Generalissimo* dropped astern, faintly lit up by the dying beams of a huge sun, flattened out on the skyline. The tall figure of his brother on the quarterdeck was no longer visible. He had probably gone below, into the wardroom.

Yuri sighed. It rose before him again, that brilliant wardroom, with its chandeliers, lamps, white tunics, silver and napery—an entrancing vision of a glamorous festive life, the far-off goal at the end of three tedious and dreary years spent in midshipman's harness. The real ship, which had shown him three scintillating days of brilliant naval service, was receding into the distance. She turned slowly, changing her outline as she did so—the picket-boat was rounding the

ship's bows. For a moment her masts came together, blended into one, and then the *Generalissimo* lost her vast length: she sat squat and heavy, borne down by the overflowing armour of her turrets and superstructures, which seemed to be oozing down her sides like too thick coats of dark-blue paint that refused to congeal. Crouched and menacing, she stared at the water in front of her with the empty sockets of her hawse-holes, and it seemed as if the glassy surface were bent at her sides under the enormous weight of her pressure. The forecastle, topped by the jack-staff with the parti-coloured flag, was deserted. The *Generalissimo* was silent, and silence hung over the roadstead.

Suddenly the ship cried out, a long, shrill, plaintive cry. It was impossible to tell where the sound came from. It was as if the ship herself were crying, and her voice, high and feeble, was harrowing. The wail lingered over the silent roadstead for several seconds, clear and piercing, then dropped an octave, and the sad slow voice began a pathetic plaint in a strange tongue.

It was the customary bugle call, sounded fifteen minutes before colours were hauled down. Yuri had heard it every day of his cruise, but never had it had such a saddening and disturbing effect upon him. Where formerly it had thrilled and evoked vague dreams, today he found it depressing. The great ship, as it receded into the distance, seemed to be sobbing with the choked terrifying sobs of a man in pain. It was most distressing. Yuri shook himself and stood up. He ascribed this feeling to the sadness of parting with the *Generalissimo*. He went out of the cabin and crossed to the side of the boat.

On the deck, thrown together in a tumbled heap, lay ditty-boxes and baskets. The boat-hook man stood among them like a lonesome pillar in the debris of a fire.

"What's this, a luggage van?" Yuri said, feeling for his cigarette case. A smoke and a chat with the man would help him to forget the ship's mournful cry.

The boat-hook man glanced at him out of the corner of his eye, without turning his head.

"They've been ordered to be delivered to the *Bditelny*. Prisoners' dunnage."

Yuri's face fell. The man's tone was grave. Yuri's joke had fallen flat. He turned away, whistling, to preserve his dignity, and looked out over the sea.

The *Bditelny* rose before him, lean-bodied and predatory. Her toylike gangway, with four rungs, hung importantly from the side, flaunting its brassbound side-stanchions and thick manropes covered

with red cloth, just like a big ship's. The deck was deserted. Suddenly and startlingly, the figure of a sentry appeared at the midship hatch, his bayonet stabbing the sky. The unusual sight of the bayonet on this part of the deck was sinister.

This bayonet, the mournful bugle call, the ditty-boxes and baskets, the jack over the empty forecastle of the silent *Generalissimo*, Morozov with the revolver, the court-martial sentence—all formed a continuous chain of association which coiled round his heart with crushing force and filled him with dismay. What a prospect—a shipload of mutineers as fellow-passengers!

And over the gangway, tending the side like a guardian angel in white, leaned a pink-cheeked sub-lieutenant. Yuri recognised him—it was Petrov, who a year before had been petty officer of his division at the Naval College. For this reason (and also because the ship had been warned of Yuri's arrival by Lieutenant Livitin's semaphore signal) he was given a cordial welcome. Petrov showed him straight into the wardroom. It was a tiny bonbonniere of a cabin, light and fragrant, and very cozy. A round table occupied almost all its space, and the walnut panelling over the sofas surrounding it gleamed with the bright enamel paint of poker-work designs and pictures done in the Bilibin manner, depicting knights, fire-birds, prince Ivans, Wise Vasilisas, and other figures of Russian folklore—a personal gift to the wardroom from the ship's commander. In one of the cabins, whose door opened straight onto the table, hung a striking lampshade: a brilliant frosted glass globe draped with a pair of diaphanous lace-trimmed lady's drawers of fine cambric with blue ribbon insertions.

Petrov introduced Yuri to the company sitting around the table—the Commanding Officer, the First Lieutenant, the Paymaster and the Engineer; Petrov himself was Officer of the Day and Navigator. The officers shook hands with him cordially, not forgetting to offer hospitality as they gave their names.

"Lieutenant Petrov the Third," said the Commanding Officer. "Tea? With a dash of brandy?"

"Sub-Lieutenant Petrov the Ninth. Glad to meet you," the Paymaster struck in, offering the sugar. "Going to Kronstadt with us? We'll be there before 'Colours'—the Admiral's in a hurry."

"Lieutenant Petrov the Seventh," said the Engineer.

"Steward, a glass!" the First Lieutenant shouted down the hatch before introducing himself: "Lieutenant Petrov the Fifth. I'm afraid you'll have to make a shakedown on the sofa, hope you don't mind."

The collection of Petrovs astonished Yuri. He asked Petrov-his-

acquaintance about it in a low voice as he splashed his face in the wash-bowl in the light of the drawer-draped lamp (the cabin belonged to this Petrov).

"You wouldn't believe it," the latter said gloomily. "When I passed out, I chose the destroyer division. Reported to the Admiral at H.Q. 'Petrov? Fine! The *Bditelny* for you!' I come there; faces as long as pokers: 'What, another Petrov?' Afterwards the Flag Lieutenant explained it when he had a bit of a load on. A crazy whim of the Admiral's. Sends all the Petrovs here, and all the Ivanovs to the *Burny*. The Commanding Officer there spoilt the whole show, though—his name is Gobyata."

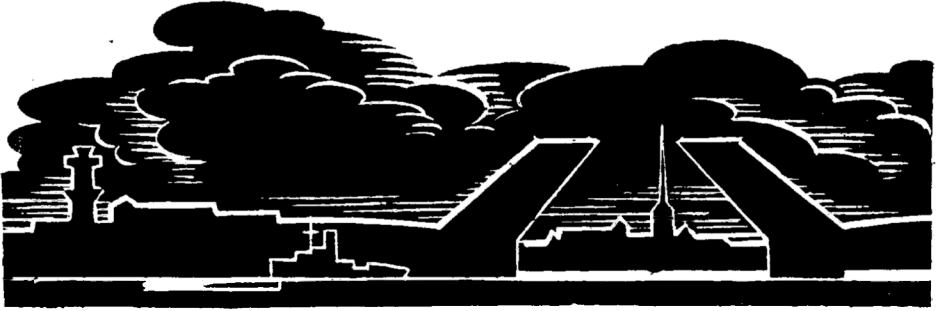
Yuri felt like laughing, but Petrov's rueful face—he was now Petrov the Fourteenth—checked the impulse. He hid his face in the towel.

"He's a swine, the Admiral!" Petrov continued. "He doesn't care a hang about us, so long as he can keep the tradition going. It's a hell of a mess, letters and telegrams get mixed up, the routine's all buggered up, and the men laugh their heads off. Come and have a drink before we sail. The Third's got some decent brandy."

At his second glass Yuri felt the table shake: the *Bditelny* was weighing anchor. The wardroom was empty, and the old sense of alarm swept back upon him. Somewhere behind the thin bulkhead, under unreliable guard, were herded the stokers off the *Generalissimo*. Would they accept the sentence submissively?

But the doughty knights and princes kept watch and ward over the thin bulkhead, the brandy raised one's spirits, and the sense of uneasy alarm disappeared.

PART



TWO

CHAPTER 7

It was sultry July. Fleecy banked-up clouds floated majestically in a lofty sky, which was of an improbable blue, like that on a highly coloured picture-postcard. Beneath them, like the motionless sword points of two sentinels, the spires of the Admiralty and the Fortress of St. Peter and St. Paul stood guard over the massive crown of the St. Isaac's Cathedral. Their gold sparkled in the sky, cascading down in a dazzling spray. St. Petersburg was giving a royal reception to the sun in her sumptuous throne-room.

Palaces strung like huge pearls on the granite thread of the quay nestled in the dark velvet of their gardens. Interlacing canals, like the moire ribbons of medals, were buckled by countless bridges. The broad blue band of the Neva crossed the shoulder of the capital like the Order of St. Andrew. Cathedral domes glittered in the marble setting of their columns like diamonds on rings bestowed by an empress. The heavy gold lettering of banks and business houses was strewn about the town like gold pieces dropped from the lavish purse of a grandee. Blocks of houses, straight as parquetry; squares smooth as the plinths of the monuments to the empire's great deeds and men; avenues straight and wide, like chutes running from lycées and academies to the wide-open spaces of the Russian plain, into

which they pour a perpetual stream of governors, public prosecutors, prelates, rural magistrates, officers, bankers and tradesmen. And there it stood facing the sea, the imperial city, renowned in song, inured to praise, its very name conjuring up in men's minds the pompous imagery of the royal court.

If Helsingfors had for Yuri the glamour of a mistress, St. Petersburg always seemed to him a purse-proud unloved bride. But he had to begin his career there, and so he had to pretend to love St. Petersburg, where the roots of that career lay hidden in the guise of connections, power, money, and a public opinion that was compulsory for the whole of Russia. "This flat, cold beauty, haughty and selfish", as Yuri described her in a letter to Nikolai, intimidated him with the studied symmetry of her chessboard lines, the granite formality of her attitudes, the chill civility of her inhabitants, smooth and muted as the wood pavement of her roadways.

The Kronstadt steamboat lazied through the water with smacking paddles, wheezing asthmatically at every turn of the wheel. The water under them was yellow and turbid; it looked disagreeably tepid, like a cooling bath, with a stale dank smell as of worn linen and unwashed bodies. The sea stood before the doorstep of the capital like a huge ugly puddle filled with the city's offal and garbage.

But the water was like that only at the boat's side; if you looked up and out, the Marquis Puddle* turned into sea again: the sun sheathed it in silver chain armour and the sky painted it a deep blue, creating a worthy frame for the gold, the granite and the wood pavements.

This was a fake, though. The city had been long accustomed to imitations and did not notice them, as one does not notice a false tooth in one's own mouth and sometimes passes a tongue over it to see if it is not the one that hurts. From the French wines made by Eliseyev ("By Appointment to His Majesty the Tsar") to the insufferable pride of the imperial eagle on the Winter Palace—everything in the capital was a crude or clever imitation, wearing the tawdry sparkle of costume jewelry gems with which St. Petersburg's lesser ladies dazzled your poor provincials. Behind this false lustre the sober eye could easily trace the dark streak which stood out distinctly on the scented skin of the Empress Elisabeth when, after a grand reception of foreign ambassadors, her maids of honour helped her out of her heavily brocaded dress: the unwashed body formed a

* The ironical name by which that part of the Gulf of Finland was known in the 19th century. It received this name from Marquis de Travers, the admiral, who did not venture beyond Kronstadt with his squadron.

sharp contrast to the neck and shoulders which the Empress exhibited to the eyes of Europe. Her Majesty was no lover of the bath, to which she went twice a year—on Christmas eve and Easter.

So, too, beneath her cloak of granite and marble did the capital conceal Russia's unspeakable filth, her squalor, ignorance and tyrannical feudalistic rule. Her granite-lined canals reeked with the powerful unfading stench of the ratepayers' lavatories. The magnificent Neva fed the islands and the suburbs with a pure infusion of cholera, supplying filtered water only to the central part of the town. Beneath the commodious parquetry of the rich, a hundred and fifty thousand "corner tenants" were cooped up in dank basements like the dead in a cemetery—one or two square metres of floor space to a man. Twenty-two thousand registered beggars flaunted their grotesque rags in the cathedral porches, where, on ton-weight silver icon screens, from behind pillars of precious lapis lazuli, the expressionless face of the Queen of Heaven looked out from an aureole of gems worth a hundred and ten thousand rubles. Palaces built on taxes deceived passers-by with the regal grandeur of their columns and vast sumptuous façades. None but a hopeless provincial, however, was overawed by their splendour, conjuring up behind their walls visions of the mysterious life led by the princes of the blood: their palaces had long been sold back to the state by these most august merchants on Change; Maria Nikolayevna* had sold hers to house the Council of State, Mikhail Pavlovich's** heirs had sold theirs to house the Russian Museum, Nikolai Nikolayevich the Elder,** after some haggling, had sold his to lodge the noble young ladies of the Xenia Institute, and his younger namesake,**** waiving etiquette, let his go to a musical comedy theatre.

Only a few palaces preserved their stately dignity as the dwellings of royalty. One such residence was the Alexander Palace at Tsarskoye Selo, through the tall railings of which one would never divine the middle-class vulgarity of the home which Nicholas II had arranged to his own taste by converting that masterpiece of Guarenghi's—the concert hall—into closets for the family's convenience. On the other hand, Nicholas II (to whom the state budget for 1913 made an allowance of 4,286,895 rubles "for His Imperial Majesty's Discretionary Use" on top of the sixteen million rubles allocated for the

* Great-granddaughter of the Emperor Paul.—*Tr.*

** Youngest son of the Emperor Paul.—*Tr.*

*** Brother of Maria Nikolayevna.—*Tr.*

**** Son of Nikolai Nikolayevich the Elder, and Commander-in-Chief of the Russian Army in World War I.—*Tr.*

maintenance of the court) presented to his subjects an admirable example of simple habits and economy by wearing his pencils down to stumps, and then, instead of throwing them away, turning them over to the Heir Apparent to amuse himself with. These touching details were broadcast to the nation in fervent patriotic brochures.

Another such residence was the Winter Palace, whose airy columns lost all the lightness planned by their great architect. Together with the rest of the palace they had been painted for economy's sake a dark-red—the colour used all over Russia for the walls of slaughterhouses to make the blood splashes on them less conspicuous (a sensible precaution, as a certain quiet morning in January was to prove).

Another such residence was the Anichkov Palace, where the widow of Alexander III, Russia's "Rural Police Commissioner", was living out a shrivelled old age. This palace, chosen as his home by an exemplary family man, lived up to the best moral traditions of the House of Romanovs: it was built originally by the Empress Elisabeth for Count Razumovsky as a token of gratitude for the wakeful nights which he had spent on the imperial couch—for similar services Catherine the Great forty years later was to present this palace to Prince Potyomkin.

The whole capital was crammed with counterfeit. The city of government officials savoured French sardines made from Riga sprats, dressed in English serge from the mills of Lodz, followed foreign politics from the columns of *Novoye Vremya*, and put the virginal bridal veil on their daughters at the altar. The city of shareholders kissed the newly discovered relics of Serafim of Sarov, called its Duma parliament, sent its children to the *gymnasia*, read Artsibashev and Verbitskaya, and prided itself before Moscow on the title of Capital of the Empire. The smoothed concrete of the new buildings looked like solid granite, and the thin sheets of glass in its huge windows looked like plate glass. The white rhomb of the university badge was the hallmark of education, and manœuvre was called culture. The roadway of Izmailovsky Prospekt shook beneath the tread of a passing company of guardsmen; the bronze angel of the Monument of Glory, perched on a column made of five rows of Turkish cannon, blessed the company with a crown of laurels—and the army seemed invincible (although it was the same army the Japanese had defeated ten years before) and the Turkish campaign a triumph (although the Dardanelles still remained in Turkish hands).

There it stood, facing the sea, City of the Empire, proud and hypocritical, deceiving, betraying, praying, and hanging.

The steamboat threaded her way with difficulty up the Neva through a press of launches and tugs, festooned with flags in a monotonous combination of white, blue and red. At the armour-plated quayside of the Baltic Dockyard formed by the low hulls of battle-ships undergoing construction, these colours acquired the clarity of naval symbols. Among the colourful pennants streaming from the dressing lines, the blue, white and red flying in vertical stripes made things clear: arranged in this manner they stood for the French flag, and hoisted on men-of-war it was a courtesy flag.

The capital took these three colours to its heart and in a spirit of exultation scattered them over its quaysides and avenues. It twined tricoloured ribbons round tramway standards and doorway pillars, interwove these colours in the fanciful rosettes on ladies' white dresses and on the lapels of frock coats and cutaways which men wore despite the heat. It flung huge streamers across the street, from which fluttered the same three colours of white, blue and red—red, white and blue. Arranged horizontally, they were called the Russian national flag; vertically—the French. Flags formed of the same colours strikingly and picturesquely symbolised the amity of the two allied nations—those of the Russian Empire and the French Republic.

The nervous excitement of this fête shook Yuri out of the unruffled composure he took pride in affecting. This gust of salutes, anthems, flags, parades, cheers (continuous ones for the Tsar, six rounds for the President), this three-day flood of splendour breaking suddenly upon the monotonous routine of the training-cruise, filled him with pride, elation, and happy devotion. This wave of enthusiasm reached its highest pitch at the imperial landing-stage on the Neva, which Yuri could see from the boat, bedecked in greenery and flags, where midshipmen picked for their stature and good looks were to form the guard of honour that day. In the empty halls of the Naval College they would find waiting for them newly made uniforms, brass belt buckles burnished by attendants to a dazzling shine, rifles cleaned by sailors, the open church door, and the colours unsheathed.

The boat approached the landing, and Yuri, throwing dignity to the winds, rushed to the starboard side and yelled "Hurrah!" together with all the rest. At the bridge, surrounded by a swarm of skiffs, motorboats and launches, lay two French destroyers. River-patrol launches circled around, pressing back the mob of boats with their sterns just as adroitly and persistently as the gendarmes did the public on the quaysides with the glossy cruppers of their horses. The short bursts of the bands along the quay were drowned in shouts of "Vive la France! Hurrah!" A graceful white yacht stood within

hailing distance of the destroyers, bedecked with flowers, top hats, flags and Paris gowns; this was the *Narcisse*, which had come in with the squadron, bringing a group of French industrial magnates. Their Russian compeers waited for them in carriages to drive them down to the Town Hall where a banquet was to be given in their honour.

From early morning the Town Hall's tower was hidden in velvet, greenery, flags, emblems and streamers; it seemed to spread a smell of scent over the whole of Nevsky. The wood pavement around it gleamed yellow like a parquet floor. A strong force of mounted police and gendarmes was stationed in the courtyard of Gostiny Dvor. The captain, sitting his horse in front of the ranks, drew on a white kid glove, which fitted as snugly as the tights on the pretty legs of the ballerinas who were rehearsing the evening's ballet in the dining-hall. The town councillors, humming the tune played by the piano and stealing glances at the shapely legs, checked the labels on the champagne bottles—every one of the eight hundred had to be of the best French vintage. Squeezed out into the dismal office by the tables and flowers, a member of the Budget Committee was busy signing caterers' bills: the champagne ran into six thousand rubles, gold medals for the guests eight thousand, flowers three thousand five hundred—the total cost of the dinner was steadily approaching the monthly cost of upkeep of the city's orphanages and charities.

In the banquet hall head waiters from the best restaurants issued curt commands to an army of underlings; in the kitchen the white-overalled Councillor of State, Aptekarev, Chief Inspector of the town's slaughter-houses, stunned live Volga sterlets with his own hands, while his assistants, veterinary surgeons, examined the products for quality. Reporters moved at a brisk trot, jotting down items of the menu and the concert programme as they ran. Both were arranged in a spirit of hospitality and with an eye to patriotism: Russian fish-soup was followed by *poularde à la parisienne*, the aria from *Sadko* by a duet from *La Boheme*, kulebiaka by roasted snipe, psaltery-players by a ballet performance, sucking-pig by lobsters, "*God Save the Tsar*" by the *Marseillaise*. Russian munificence was balanced by French grace, sheer brawn by Gallic diplomacy, the fluctuating ruble by the gold franc, the crown by the Phrygian cap. It was a genuine Franco-Russian alliance.

All the way from the Town Hall to the Admiralty Nevsky Prospekt was crowded with people waiting for the President to pass. Postcard views of Paris, portraits of France's leading personalities and tricoloured rosettes and medals sold in the shops like hot cakes.

The house of Abrikosov & Sons put competitors' noses out of joint by issuing "Tromblon" caramels and "Stylet" chocolates bearing photographs of the destroyers lying off Nikolayevsky Bridge. As on Easter Sunday, no tramcars were running.

The mounted police and gendarmes were out in force, stationed in the side-streets, and the house porters hastily swept up the horses' droppings in the roadway without waiting to be shouted at. The side-streets were empty, as Nevsky had been sealed off since nine in the morning.

By midday the city had overflowed its banks and splashed a white foam of dresses out onto the quay. From the Nikolayevsky to the Liteiny Bridge the quay presented a scene of opening night at a theatre. The *beau monde* leaned back in upholstered carriages as in the armchairs of dress-circle boxes, and the ladies wore evening dresses. The air was scented and the crowd surged on the pavement as in the aisles of the stalls, chatting vivaciously and blinking in the sun. Officers' caps stood out red and green amid the bright hats of the ladies, and sabres clattered on the stones. At the royal landing-stage and outside the French Embassy the white-clad police kept the crowd at a respectable distance. Strips of red velvet in the roadway marked the path of the distinguished visitors. Troitsky Bridge bent beneath the weight of garlands and flags; an arch over it bearing the huge letters "R.F." awaited the President, who was to pass under it on his way to the cathedral to lay a wreath on the tomb of Alexander III.

Strong detachments of mounted police and gendarmes stood in the streets in Peterburgskaya Storona, their massive horses snorting, tossing their black shiny heads and dropping flakes of white foam. No one was allowed near the bridges.

The stones of Palace Square gleamed in the sun through the vistaed archway of the General Staff building. The flagstaff on the palace was still bare, but a shiny black ribbon of carriages and motorcars was already winding around the entrances.

Strong detachments of mounted police and gendarmes stood in Moika and the streets running off it; dangling whips tickled the twitching skin of the sleek horses. No one was allowed into the square; the working-class districts on the outskirts were sealed off from the centre of the city.

The platoon of midshipmen came out onto the landing-stage at half past eleven. Yuri Livitin, being tall of stature, marched with the leading four; right in front of him swung the brocaded folds of the unfurled flag, keeping a rhythm of its own. The Naval

College did not carry the flag the infantry's way; its standard-bearers had developed this smooth swinging stride of their own in defiance of the restrictive drumstick march of the army. Smartly dressed women at the bridge parapets turned and cast glances of lingering admiration at the trim youths in their white new uniforms with blue collars. The proximity of the flag (or was it these glances?) made Yuri's body stiffen like a taut-wound spring and brought a flush to his cheeks. Dazedly, as in a dream, he followed the flag across the bridge, and did not come to earth until he found himself staring at a stony wall of soldiers instead of at the excited faces of the women. The men's moustaches, all similarly curled up, were exactly alike, and their faces, blank as dolls', looked like so many prints from a single photograph. Yuri's eye travelled down the line—the original was on the right flank, wearing captain's insignia. He was the Company Commander.

"A good job of work!" Yuri said to himself admiringly.

The midshipmen were marched down to the water's edge and lined up on the right side of the wide gangway. On the left stood a platoon of the Imperial Cossack Life-Guards. Their gigantic bodies, black beards spread fanwise over scarlet tunics, and shaggy forelocks hanging from under fur papakhas worn tilted on one ear, were designed to impress the visitors, for whom they were to symbolise Russia in all her pristine might, with her boundless spaces, primeval forests, rocklike fists and faces of fervent loyalty. But as an indication that this crude elemental force was tamed by civilisation and controlled by the country's brains, the frail figure of the lieutenant was placed before these bearded barbarians. Through the European pallor of his delicate porcelain face shone the splendour of an imposing hereditary title; white-gloved fingers toyed with the jewelled sword-hilt; age-old culture lurked in the proud curve of his lips, ready to gush forth in a magnificent cascade of that exquisite French language, which fleeing the pressure of the third estate, had sought refuge in the homes of Russia's aristocracy, and which was used to draft the bill submitted to the Emperor Paul binding the cossacks to the land of their military chiefs—a bill which, becoming law, put an end to the ceaseless revolts among cossackdom and established a loyal cossack nobility to bolster up the throne.

The command "Stand easy" at last being given, the lieutenant nodded affably to Livitin's neighbour, Count Bobrinsky. Yuri was nettled: that beanpole with the handle to his name knew every soul in St. Petersburg—guardsmen, ministers, members of the court, industrial tycoons—and never missed an opportunity to boast of his

acquaintances. He did so now, too, by promptly informing the man on his left:

"Know who that is? Why, it's Prince Vadbolsky, the famous rake! He lost fifty thousand at cards last year—more than he was ever worth. Got some goof of a partner to take him on tick. They were going to kick him out of the regiment for it, but he was no fool—he ran off to Mme. Demidova—you know, that dizzy old dame with the youthful frailties?—he was her kept man at the time. Lays his revolver down on the table together with an I.O.U.—either you cough up or I do away with myself in front of your eyes. The old girl jibbed at first, but she signed the I.O.U. How we laughed when we heard it! This time he played his cards well—if you love me, prove it. . . ."

Yuri wrinkled his nose with distaste. Specially to annoy the count, he said:

"It's a damn shame—the Naval Corps and cossacks! At least they might have put the Pages opposite us!"

"Nonsense, my dear chap," Bobrinsky took him up at once, shaking his incongruously small head. "Pages my eye! Pages are nothing to boast about! Try and find such brutes in France. What a wicked-looking bunch! By the way, do you know why we're here?"

"Come on, Count, make it a good 'un!" a voice from the rear rank said disrespectfully. "Attention please, gentlemen! Bobrinsky's going to give us the latest gossip."

"It isn't gossip, it's true, I got it from my father. When Sazonov was arranging the reception programme with the French ambassador, he cracked a joke about these cossacks. 'I hope these splendid and fearsome fellows don't frighten the President,' he said. 'But they're dressed in red, and that colour, if I am not mistaken, is dear to the republican heart.' Paléologue answered wittily: 'It is. But it is most pleasing to the Frenchman's eye when blended harmoniously with white and blue.' Sazonov took the cue: he promptly rang up Grigorovich and asked him to send us here, in full rig."

"An anecdote," Yuri said wryly, but nevertheless stored it away in his mind for future use.

"Not an anecdote, but diplomatic art. Take that infantry company over there. You may think those muzzle-loading-ye-Lord-be-praised footsloggers are here by accident? Just think, gentlemen—why wasn't the guard sent to meet the President instead of that miserable 90th Omega Regiment?"

"Their mugs are alike," the same voice from the rear flung in. "Their dials have been picked beautifully."

"Yes, but what's the reason? What's the idea, gentlemen?" Bobrinsky cried, going into raptures. "It has a deep meaning! As much as to say, see what our country is like, any regiment of the line there can provide a whole company of twins! See what reserves we must have if such a selection is possible! The Company Commander will make a career for himself, that's certain. I bet you he'll be decorated before the day is out."

Yuri turned away. Bobrinsky's chatter annoyed him; it had that quality of cocksure inanity which Yuri thought so unbecoming in a naval officer, and smacked of the Horseguards rather than of the Navy. While making this his excuse for his dislike of the lanky count, Yuri concealed from himself the true cause, which was envy. He envied him everything—the fact that the count left the College every day in his own car, the fact that his father was a reactionary M.P. of ill-repute, the fact that he knew all society gossip, and that he rolled in wealth.

Yuri looked at the landing-stage.

Strapping sailors from the crew of the Emperor's yacht stood stiffly in pairs at the gangway, ready to tend the boats on their arrival. The notabilities who were allowed onto the landing spilt the gay music of French upon the air. The Chaplain of the Army and Navy, with the fine features of a jesuit of the Orthodox Church experienced in court intrigues, smoothed out the ribbon of St. George over his glittering chasuble and leaned over a beautiful woman wearing a white-lace dress. Count Tolstoi, the Mayor of St. Petersburg, looking like Don Quixote unexpectedly attired in swallow-tails and order ribbon, nodded his top-hatted head right and left, acting the amiable host. A blue wisp of incense issued from under a tent, where, on a snow-white tablecloth, stood the wonder-working icon and a loaf of bread on a carved wooden platter of simple but ancient workmanship. The Archdeacon of the Court cleared his throat with the noise of a twelve-incher.

The French naval officers, surrounded by frock coats and Russian uniforms, eyed the strapping sailors, their vivacious black-moustached faces registering respect and curiosity. These faces, with the gilt-braided caps and comic-opera uniforms, were oddly reminiscent of the figures on pornographic postcards. One of the officers, with a twinkle of amusement, hailed a sailor in his picket-boat; the man sprang ashore adroitly, the red pompon jiggling on his baby-cap. The officer pushed him towards a Russian sailor.

"*Allons vite!*" he said, looking up at the huge figure, "*Prenez ce petit, vous géant russe!*"

Uncomprehending, the sailor looked down nervously at the Frenchman. Count Tolstoi came to the rescue, translating encouragingly: "Take him in your arms, my lad, rock him like a baby. Show them what Russian muscle is like. Go on, don't be afraid!"

The man's eye roved in search of authority and came to rest on the Captain of the Dockyard. The latter jerked his well-groomed grey beard by way of assent. Thereupon the sailor lifted the stocky Frenchman bodily off the ground and held him aloft over the heads of the crowd, who started applauding vociferously. The officer, pleased with his brainwave, snatched off his cap and shouted:

"*La voilà l'entente cordiale! Vive la marine russe!*"

"*Vive la France! Hurrah!*"

The photographers squeezed their bulbs. The midshipmen laughed. Suddenly the bands on the quay struck up the *Marseillaise*. There was a swift flash of cossack sabres and midshipmen's bayonets, and the infantry company of the Onega Regiment, looking like so many identical tin soldiers, silently presented arms. The French sailor, dangling in mid-air, brought his hand to the salute; the Russian gripped the man's belt with his left hand and raised his right hand to his cap. In this grotesque pose he stood motionless, holding the Frenchman at arm's length.

The *Marseillaise* lasted a long time. His arm shook, and beads of sweat broke out on his red face, but he continued to hold the Frenchman at arm's length, while he saluted with his right hand. The photographers were all of a dither. Cheers and clapping rang loud over the landing-stage. Re-echoed by the people on the bridge, they swept down the quay all the way to Liteiny Bridge. The heavy guard of mounted police and gendarmes stationed around all the bridges and streets leading to the centre from the outlying working-class districts became alert; the horses twitched their ears, the gendarmes felt the saddles for their whips, and the captains looked round nervously.

The *Marseillaise* ended, to be promptly followed by *God Save the Tsar* struck up on the decks of the French destroyers and caught up by the bands on the quayside. Prince Vadbolsky stiffened, a motionless figure of porcelain, and the cossacks tensed the muscles of their necks as they prepared to utter their bloodcurdling hurrah.

The sailor began to turn pale. The blood ebbed from his face and his eyes dimmed. He staggered. The arm that held the Frenchman began to sag and the fingers of the hand at his cap twitched convulsively. The Frenchman was no longer laughing.

Like a country squire on the doorstep of his manor showing off

to his guests the unique spectacle of some cruel sport performed by his serfs, the Admiral stood at the head of the crowd, rightfully claiming his share of the appreciative applause. It was he and his predecessors, admirals and captains of the fleet, who had bred in the uncouth and timid muzhiks this spirit of foolhardy daring called "naval dash", that senseless, thrice-accursed habit born of the lash and fostered by the rum ration:

"Yesterday the frigate *St. John the Warrior* took a disgracefully long time stowing the sails, in which manoeuvre she was a full minute and a quarter behind the other ships of the squadron. I recommend from my own personal experience that in order to acquire confidence in trimming the yards, the hands be sent aloft every day at rest periods under the supervision of experienced boatswains and officers in charge, the latter to have it impressed upon them that they will be deprived of their own rest period until they have developed in the men that naval dash necessary to good seamanship."

Naval dash and swagger! A tale of smashed oars, ruptured groins, broken hawsers, tsar's rubles, injured vocal chords, eight women, quart swigs and no heel taps, five-kopek pieces bent double....

"The Commission assembled this twenty-third day of July, 1849, on board the eighty-four-gun ship *The Three Hierarchs*, having examined the ship's compass damaged by the fall from the fore topgallant yard of topman Agafon Ivashchenko while setting sail, has found that:

"The glass is broken, the compass cards and magnets are crushed and stained with blood, the brass binnacle is dented, and the compass is unfit for further use. Therefore the Commission submits this certificate for Your Excellency's signature for the purpose of charging the cost of the said compass in the sum of 72 rubles against the Admiralty as an expense incidental to service afloat...."

The Russian national anthem floated over the landing-stage and the quaysides with the slow flight of the imperial eagle. The sailor's arm was trembling, the red pompon on the Frenchman's cap twitched, the heart of the old sea dog sang, and the Admiral's glance pleaded and threatened.

No one knows who cracked the unkind joke—afterwards, in the drawing-rooms, it was ascribed to the sharp-tongued Baroness Osten-Saken, who stood for a German orientation. The applause subsided, heads turned away from the sailor, and cold official masks chased the look of admiration from the faces of the French officers. The laughter turned to a snigger, smiles to an ironical biting of the lips, as the poisoned shaft winged its way over the quayside, bending heads to whispering lips:

"What a curious allegory.... If you ask me this suggests 1812 rather than the *entente cordiale*. Look at him—he's shaken the life out of that poor Frenchy. What is it, a hint?"

As a matter of fact the Frenchman, dangling in the grip of the Russian Hercules, remotely but insidiously resembled the cheap patriotic chromo picturing the flight of the Grand Armée. This was plain to everyone except the Admiral. At last, he too saw the joke, whose subtle poison sank in slowly. His cheek twitched, and the handsome beard issued a jerky summons to his flag lieutenant.

"Stop that exhibition! The idiot has overdone it!" the Admiral said through his teeth, his hand still at his cap, since the anthem was still being played.

The flag lieutenant glared at the sailor, drilled the reeling figure with an angry eye, but the tremendous exertion had deprived the man of that sixth sense which makes a sailor feel the glance of an officer upon him. The flag lieutenant then communicated a slight swing to his left fist and uttered a hissing sound through his compressed lips. The invocation worked, it drew to him the sailor's agonised glance. The flag lieutenant's lips, eyes and eyebrows flashed messages of fury, and gradually it dawned on the sailor's dazed mind that something was amiss. The flag lieutenant jogged him with another silent lip movement (conveying an unmistakable and irreverent allusion to the sailor's ancestry), his hand still raised in the salute. The solemn strains hovered eagle-like over the imperial city, the midshipmen, the cossacks and the Onega dolls stood "at the present", the civilians stood bare-headed, the people on the bridge re-echoed the majestic words, the flag lieutenant breathed unutterable curses. Fyodor Gromak, peasant from the province of Tula, aged 25, illiterate, record clean, slowly put the Frenchman down. The landing-stage swam before his eyes, a misty vision of napes and backs that were suddenly turned to him when the ambiguous meaning of the allegory dawned upon the assembled company.

The anthem came to an end. The French sailor, elated at the thought of his photograph appearing in all the papers the next morning, and delighted with his Herculean matc, shook Gromak's hand, babbling a patriotic speech. Immediately two officers—one a black-and-gold moustached Frenchman, the other a white-and-gold tall Russian—turned simultaneously, and quickly but quietly expressed one and the same thought in different languages:

"Finissez. Fichtre, espèce d'idiot!"

"Get back to your boat, you meathead!"

The French sailor instantly sprang into his picket-boat, and the Russian, swaying unsteadily, made his way to his along the edge of the landing.

There he was greeted with envy and sneers.

"Crawling, eh?" the boat-hook man said. "What did you get—a ruble or a drink?"

"Give me some water," Gromak said, and while he drank thirstily, like a horse that had run a race for nothing, the boat-hook man continued his taunts:

"An also-ran! You shouldn't have taken it on if you didn't have the guts for it. What will those French sailors think of us?"

Gromak swore half-heartedly.

"I was told to let him go," he said, then added with a gesture of disgust: "Oh, to hell with them—you never know where you are with them! Let me sit down, I'm all done in: must have strained my heart, damn it, feel a bit groggy."

He went for'ard, but here, too, a head popped up from the engine-room, a snub-nosed grinning head.

"A fine hero!" it said in an undertone. "Plenty 'o' guts but no bowels. Enough to make a cat laugh".

"Go to hell! Leave me alone!" Gromak snapped.

"Made me laugh, anyway," the stoker continued. "You looked like a performing poodle, so help me God! You amused the gentry, then got a kick in the arse—'shoo off now, we've had enough of you!' Shouldn't be surprised if you're placed on report for your pains. Go and lie down, maybe it'll clear your brains a bit."

Gromak flung himself on the locker and stared upwards with eyes that had suddenly grown tired. His great overworked heart pounded painfully. A sense of simple human grievance rankled in him, given a new turn by the stoker's words.

"The gentry, blast their dirty souls!" he suddenly said aloud.

A burst of music came from the banks, but he did not stir. The festivities went on without him.

A landau drawn by four white horses drove up to the landing-stage, and an elderly Frenchman in uniform and plumed cocked hat stepped out wearing a short-trimmed grey moustache, a dry sallow skin, and the title of French ambassador. Maurice Paléologue had arrived to meet the President. This meant that the yacht which the Tsar had lent to the honoured guest would soon be putting in.

She appeared round the bend of the Neva at twenty minutes past one. Black, with gold figurehead and gold carvings on her sides, she glided noiselessly upstream, the only silent object among the thunder of salutes, the only naked participant amid the rich tri-coloured draperies, the only moving body among all things motionless. From her low mast—the only upright thing among the bent bowing backs—floated a single flag, the flag of the French Republic,

the flag of Russia's faithful ally. The Russian guns fired blank salvoes at it with as much smoke and sound as those which, at Borodino, Leipzig and Sevastopol, had fired iron cannonballs at it throughout the last century.

Thus, amid the smoke and thunder of cannon, the gleam of bayonets and sabres, in an obsequious entourage of epaulets, shakos and military uniforms, in all the sinister pomp and clamour of abeyant war, did there appear in the Russian capital:

"the great statesman, the guardian of European peace, who, a year ago, curbed the mad appetite of Germany, when she coveted French Morocco ..."

(*Rech*)

"the patriot, restorer of the tottering military power, not only in France, where it had been undermined by the Radical Socialists' internal policy, but also in Russia which at one time had forgotten that the sphere of action of the Franco-Russian alliance was not the East, but Europe ..."

(*Temps*)

"... of whose election to the French Chamber a curious anecdote is narrated to the effect that his father, a simple farmer, persuaded his son's opponent to stand down in favour of his son, in return for which he mowed the man's field for a whole day ..."

(*St. Petersburg Gazette*)

"... a champion of teetotalism, which he promoted in France as Minister of Education by introducing lectures on the evil of drink ..."

(*St. Petersburg Diocesan Gazette*)

"... brilliant lawyer, eminent economist, elegant conversationalist, owner of a comfortable chateau in the south of Brittany, where his charming wife has a rare collection of China ..."

(*Town and Country*) (St. Petersburg)

"... whose arrival marks a new phase in the alliance between the two countries, so different in spirit and regime, but so nearly identical in their broad national interests ..."

(*Eclair*)

"... a truly democratic president, faithful mouthpiece of the free French people ..."

(*Dyen*)

"... on whose lips words acquire such force, significance and authority that everyone soon becomes aware that the Emperor listens to him with earnest and serious attention, and I feel that many of these gold-laced dignitaries are thinking: 'Now that is how a great autocrat should talk ...'"

(*Maurice Paléologue*)

"... whose career is the typical career of a bourgeois businessman, who sells himself in turn to all parties in politics, to all rich men 'outside' politics ..."

(*Lenin*)

a fat man with the face of a small shopkeeper, wearing evening dress and the St. Andrew's ribbon, a shareholder in metal and military works, President of the French Republic, Raymond Poincaré.

It was no velvet carpet that was spread under his feet at the landing-stage in the city of St. Petersburg. It was imperial Russia prostrating herself. Her army dipped the colours of its guard of honour before him. The Russian Church blessed him with her wonder-working icon. Bankers bent double before him. Commerce and Industry, with the hands of the Mayor, proffered him the bread, flax and forests of Russia in the felicitous symbol of the loaf, set on an embroidered linen teacloth in a carved wooden platter. The autocratic eagle, with the Order of St. Andrew in its talons (conferred by the Tsar yesterday), snuggled under the lapel of the President's coat in suggestive proximity to the silk-lined pocket. The landing-stage shook as Raymond Poincaré stepped upon it with all the weight of the billion-rubled loans lent to the Russian autocracy and Russian capitalism by the French banks. The boss had arrived in his great sprawling village to demand an account from his bibulous headman Nikolai Romanov.

The blithe sun-washed strains of the *Marseillaise* cascaded over the whole city—over the quays, bridges and workers' districts, floating over top hats, ladies' hats, and flags, over the troops, the police and the great crowds of workers in the outlying districts.

The city rejoiced on that beautiful day. All its inhabitants poured out into the streets. Trams did not run and the shops were closed. Bakers baked no bread. Factories did not work. Two hundred thousand workers turned out into the streets, not counting the well-dressed crowds on the quayside. It was a gala day of general rejoicing. Top hats, parasols, flags, flowers, cobblestones, whips, police troopers, and shop signs were tossed up into the air by the jubilant population. The streets were impassable, packed with frock coats, ladies' dresses, undress and full-dress uniforms, carriages, bands, cossacks, workmen, gendarmes, knocked-over lamp-posts, assaulted police officers, overturned trams, barricades, wounded, killed.

The salute was deafening. The whole city was shooting from end to end—the ships on the Neva, the fort at Troitsky Bridge, the police in Ligovskaya Street, the cossacks in Neishlot Alley, the gendarmes in Putilov Road, nine workers of the Aivaz Works whom the police had chased onto the roof of house No. 12 in Tobolsk Street, and an inspector and two policemen who were thrown into the water from Sampsonievsky Bridge.

Raymond Poincaré, wreathed in gunpowder smoke, pressed his

hand to his heart. The capital responded with the smile of her marble palaces and the gleam of her gold-crowned cathedrals, determined to make a brave show. Hidden from the guests by a solid wall of gendarmes, the outskirts battered against her back in angry ominous waves of strikers; they gripped her throat with the cold strangling steel of her lifeless factories, closed in upon her with their black smokestacks reared menacingly in the sky like the sticks and stakes of an infuriated mob sweeping down upon the manor. The city's main thoroughfares were convulsed with the swift shock of mounted posses dashing from factory to factory, from suburb to suburb. The telephones at the Governor's headquarters sounded a continuous tocsin. There had been revolution in the air this fourth day.

Russia was pregnant with revolution, ill-tempered, hysterical and wantonly cruel, like a woman near her time, who was loth to bear. The revolution was advancing out of the dim-distant ages, conceived by history, inevitable and natural as the birth of a child, be it ever so hated from the moment of its conception or cursed at every stirring in the womb. Of late, ever since the Lena shootings, these jolts had become unendurable: strikes and demonstrations had convulsed the ripe full body of the Empire with the throes of travail which nothing could avert. Household remedies were of no use; neither Duma poultices, nor the patent medicines made up at the pharmacy near Politseisky Bridge, neither the hot baths of the punitive forces, nor the tight trusses of the Okhranka,* neither the relieving pogrom leeches of the Union of the Russian People, nor even the rusty Russo-Japanese needle, which broke into two places—Mukden and Tsushima—nothing could induce abortion, nothing could arrest the natural growth of the hateful foetus. It grew in the womb of Imperial Russia, bound to her by the laws of historical evolution, nourished with her food, life within a life, the new fated to destroy the old. Relatives clutched their heads in despair—the scandal was not only a disgrace they could never live down, it threatened their share of inherited property: Russia was bound to spring some surprise upon the world by giving birth to some savage, untameable brat of an offspring! Scandals occurred in the best of families, but people somehow managed to hush them up: France went through the excruciating pangs of childbirth and crushed the royal lilies, but was delivered at last of the quite well-mannered Third Republic; royal England gave birth to a highly respectable parliamentary offspring. But this

* The secret political police.—*Tr.*

monstrosity, while yet unborn, was bent on pulling the locks of this sweet French maid, scolding the English boy, and screaming downright obscenities about a social revolution and workers of all countries!

The only alternative was the knife. Only by the broad knife of war could this hateful foetus be slashed up in the womb and its dead remains extracted in a welter of blood. But having once tried this radical treatment with disappointing results, tsarist Russia would take no risks. The operation would have to be performed in European style, under the general anesthesia of Slav-unity ideas, a fortifying diet of gold francs, and the watchful care of the best Parisian gynecologists who had received a good schooling during the Commune. Such an operation had every chance of success.

"That's why Monsieur Poincaré is here—that hireling of the French bankers! That's why they are all fawning on him at the quay—the whole gang of tsarist moguls, manufacturers and land-owners at the beck and call of French capital! Their interests coincide."

The five hundred odd workers of the Lessner factory stood listening in grim silence. Yegor Tisheninov stood over them on a barrel at the factory gates, a keen, sandy-haired, weary-looking figure. His patched, faded jacket hung loosely upon him, and his green trousers bagged at the knees, which were swollen with the rheumatism of the hungry student. After each sentence he shut his lips and worked the muscles of his jaws as though he were squeezing the words in his mouth into a taut vibrant spring, and when he opened it again they shot out hard, clear, and passionate. He had been speaking for over five minutes without being interrupted. A boy sat on the gate keeping a look-out for cossacks along the quay, but none appeared. They could not leave the centre of the city unguarded in order to break up one of the scores of meetings that were being held.

"War—that's what he has brought with him in his ironclad. War is profitable for the French industrialists—they've invested millions in war factories. War is profitable for our own capitalists, who dream of getting rid of German exports to Russia. War is profitable for the Russian autocracy too—it's prepared to give away its whole army in order to tear off the noose we are tightening round its neck. War will round up the advance guard of the workers, those organised in parties and unions, and send them to the front."

"They can't take everybody, men are needed at the factories too," said an elderly workman standing near the gate. He looked round, seeking approval.

A man next to him answered gruffly:

"Those who have a hundred to spare needn't worry—I bet you they'll stay put."

"What are you driving at?"

"Oh, nothing."

"Have you counted my money?" the first man insisted, but the other turned away with an ironical smile. From the corner where a young woman in a blue dress stood—she kept adjusting the shawl on her head, listening not so much to Tisheninov as to the murmured conversation around her—a third man joined in.

"It's not difficult to count when a man has a patch o' vegetable garden and a cow of his own," he said sucking the ends of his iron-grey moustache.

The first man snapped back at this, addressing no one in particular, "Get your own before counting other people's money."

"I would, but I haven't got the ooftish. It all went in fines."

"Why don't you stand the foreman a drink? You'd scrape the money together in no time," the young woman said, turning upon the elder man challengingly, ready to do wordy battle. He refused the challenge and spat aside. Suddenly the woman started and looked about her in alarm.

"Goodness me, where is Lena?"

Lena, a tow-haired toddler in a bright-red frock, had picked her way among the ranks of highboots growing out of the ground like the bare trunks of trees, in search of her similar, who must be roaming this wild wood just as she was. The boots smelt pleasantly of tar. Their ranks had begun to thin and the wide sunny space of the yard gleamed between their towering trunks, when somebody's big hands caught her up and sent her travelling back overhead.

Safe in her mother's arms, she quickly found her bearings; here among the tree-tops things were much more interesting than on the ground. The yard was chock-full of heads, just as in a church. At a little window on the second floor a bald-headed man with his tie askew kept popping up. She recognised him as the man who gave money to her mother every Saturday. Somewhere behind him a bell kept tinkling merrily, and then he would look round and vanish with waving arms like the funny little man at the Punch-and-Judy show. There was another man in the yard—a skinny one with lovely gold buttons on a green jacket and with green trousers to match, who had got up on a barrel. He was talking in a loud voice, saying something uninteresting, but everybody was listening to him. And there

was that boy sitting on the gate, who must have had a still better view, and for a while sharp envy blotted out all other feelings.

The green man went on shouting at the top of his voice, and waved his hand in front of him all the time.

"They'll try to bamboozle you with the word 'Fatherland'! They'll make you kill your fellows—the workers of Germany and Austria! They'll use your hands to strangle the revolution! Because, by killing workmen and peasants of another country at the front, you will be helping the government of that country to crush the revolution, just as, in killing you, the workers of Germany will help tsarism to stamp out the coming revolution. That's why all the governments of the capitalists and landowners have everything to gain from war! That's what the Russian autocrat tsar and the servant of the French bankers—the president of the republic—are now planning between them!"

The thud of a gun salvo floating up across the smooth sheet of the Neva punctuated the sentence with a heavy dot. Tisheninov raised his hand.

"Hear that, comrades?" he shouted. "Those are the first shots at the revolution! They are more terrible than the shots fired on the Lena, more terrible than the crackle of the rifles in Winter Palace Square. They are shooting at the working class of all Europe, if not of the whole world, they are destroying us not by the dozen, but by the million! Down with the secret pacts between the tsar and the capitalists' republic! Down with war, long live the workers' revolution! It is mounting, it is spreading all over Russia.... Kharkov, Moscow, Tiflis, Baku, Lodz, Ivanovo-Voznesensk. Only four days ago the tsarist police officers were shooting down the Putilov workers who came out in support of their Baku comrades. And today, over two hundred thousand people are on strike in St. Petersburg alone and the gendarmes can't drive them back to work. Get the workers to strike, strengthen the army of the revolution, stop the factories, close down the shops! We'll smash the tsar's power by depriving it of bread and light, of trains and telegraphs! The Mensheviks are ranting about economic demands, we call on you to make political demands. The motto of the general strike must be: control over the factory-owners, land for the peasants, down with the autocracy, long live the republic! Not the republic of Poincaré, which is at one with the tsar, but the democratic republic with a government of the workers and peasants!"

When, for some reason which Lena could not understand, they all started shouting and moved towards the gates, she realised that something very exciting was afoot. The boy slid down the gate post in the

twinkling of an eye and padded ahead on bare feet. The green man jumped off the barrel, and made his way forward, smiling, and talking to those around him. Somebody in front lifted up a stick, and a flag the same colour as Lena's frock fluttered from it gaily. She gazed open-mouthed at the seething crowd, her eyes shining with delight as she swam out into the street in her mother's arms, looking back pityingly at those who remained in the yard and took no part in this jolly game.

Those who stayed behind watched the others going without a smile. They stood about in gloomy silent groups. Then Lena saw the bald-headed Punch go up to them, and they started saying something to him, spreading their hands and shaking their heads.

At the Liteiny Bridge the Lessner factory people came up against an obstacle. A strong force of mounted police and cossacks stood at the head of the bridge, the divide between the centre and the workers' districts. The cossack captain turned slowly in his saddle and gazed at the French embassy; there the embankment looked like a flowerbed, the motley crowd bordered by the scarlet uniforms of the lifeguards; the brass trumpets of the band, waiting in readiness for the President, gleamed in the sunshine. The captain cursed his luck: whenever some fête was on you were sure to be told off for police duty.

The Chief of Police, a burly elderly colonel, huge and majestic as the nearby statue of Alexander III, sat on his massive black horse looking down the bridge. The Nizhegorodskaya was sealed off by a line of police, who admitted to the bridge only well-dressed people, cabs with fare, and housemaids hurrying to the central baker shops (all the shops in Vyborgskaya Storona had been shuttered up since early in the morning for fear of window-smashing). The strikers stood about the street in groups, inactive, exchanging smiling remarks and casting glances towards the bridge. On reaching them, the Lessner people broke up into groups too, and the Chief of the Police smiled: this break-up of the crowd betrayed its indecision and lack of leadership. Breaking up these groups was a sheer waste of time; it was like chasing flies—as soon as you drive them away from one place they settle in another. Colonel Filonov believed in acting only when he was sure of success.

A burst of cheering came from the direction of the embassy and the opening bars of the *Marseillaise* floated down the water. It rolled from the brass throats of the trumpets like tingling champagne. Both the colonel and the cossack captain of one accord squared their shoulders as they listened to the rousing refrain, martial and glorious

as the charge of hussars. It was a splendid anthem, the best national anthem in the world: it fired men's hearts and minds, led them on to victory.

Destiny had played strange tricks with this fine anthem in the course of a century. Once, hot as the blood of the barricades and gleaming like the knife of the guillotine, the *Marseillaise* had led the troops of the revolution against the aristocratic coalition. It had blown up the castles of the feudal lords and flung them onto the heap of royal lilies together with the head of Louis XVI. The Convention flung the heavy silk of the tricolour upon its rebellious wing, and from a hymn of the revolution it became a hymn of the nation, just as the third estate that had begotten it turned the revolutionary people into a reactionary government. Next we find it leading the army of "patriots" to the Sedan in a futile attempt to bolster up the throne of the Second Empire. To its heroic strains the men of Versailles marched into the burning streets of Paris, finishing off the Communards. The bravura of its fanfares together with the sabres of the expeditionary army and the crosses of the missionaries cleaved a way into the colonies for the usurious capital of the Third Republic. Then in Tunisia, in Algeria, in Indo-China, in Morocco, in Guinea, Madagascar, Tahiti—everywhere, through the silver trumpets of military bands, it lied to the world about liberty, equality and fraternity in a republic of concessionaires and rentiers, lied the way only French lawyers can lie from the deputy's rostrum—glibly, beautifully, with Gascon heroics and patriotic fervour.

And now here, under the grim shadow of the Russian crown, the Russian revolution was singing it to an accompaniment of punitive rifles, singing it as it prepared for the first stage of the struggle, for the destruction of absolutism, singing it on the barricades of Presnya in Moscow, and on the Putilov Road in St. Petersburg, singing it while half-listening already to another hymn, little known as yet, but one whose measured tread was inevitable as doom. There would come a day when the twain would meet in mortal combat—one a new victorious hymn, the other a dying anachronism, a meaningless ghost of its former revolutionary self.

But on that hot July day of the year nineteen hundred and fourteen the capital was still wreathed in the smoke of its forest fires, the salutes on the Neva and the rifle shots in the outskirts, and the capital was still known as St. Petersburg, and the vast beggarly land as the Russian Empire, and the army still stood opposed to the people.

The *Marseillaise* flared up suddenly at the corner of Finsky Alley like a spurt of flame from a dead fire. It swept, swaying,

across the whole of Nizhegorodskaya Street, massing the groups into a solid crowd, and, preceding the latter's slow movement, trickled through into the brain of the Chief of Police by way of the limp hair-growth around his big old ears. Colonel Filonov sat up in his saddle and raised an astonished eyebrow. The line of police had fallen apart, giving free passage to the crowd. What the devil—had they gone mad?

CHAPTER 8

Having lunched late but well in the empty dining-hall, Yuri Livitin left the College in an excellent frame of mind. The day lay spread before him like the smooth pavement of the festive city. He was about to make for the tram stop, but remembered with annoyance that the trams were not running. As he stood hesitating, a yawning cabman nearby gathered up his reins and drove up to him.

"Cab, sir?" the man said, leaning over his seat.

Livitin glanced doubtfully at the pneumatic tyres of the smart droshky, one of those usually to be found standing in Nevsky, who apparently had been washed up here by the tide of holiday festivities. These fellows usually made you pay through the nose.

"Liteiny, next to Basseinaya," he hazarded.

"Three rubles, sir."

"Crazy fool!" Livitin said angrily and walked away.

"Two-fifty, sir, in honour of our allies."

"Eighty kopeks," Yuri began, then suddenly broke off as he saw the spindle-legged figure of Count Bobrinsky striding towards him, waving a hand. His sword, which was as long as himself, clanked on the pavement with the help of a ten-kopek piece slipped into the scabbard. "Could he have heard me haggling with the cabbie?" Yuri thought with dismay.

"Which way are you going, Livitin? Give me a lift," the Count said. "Liteiny? Splendid. Get a move on, whiskers! Do you mind if I sit on your right, Livitin?"

"Not at all," Yuri said in the tone of a host.

They got in, propping their swords on the foot-rest.

"Good that I met you. Imagine my position: no one at home knows I'm here in St. Petersburg, and it's no use phoning—Dad is probably out motoring since early in the morning, and Ma must have taken the horses. And not a cabbie to be had for love or money! And then I spotted you, brooding over this one."

"These decorations rather put me out," Yuri lied, pointing to the two tricoloured flags fluttering from the shaft-bow. Bobrinsky looked at them over the cabman's shoulder and laughed.

"They're all over the place! Never mind, we look as if we're going to a village wedding!"

The driver started the horse off at a round trot, shouting at the pedestrians crowding the pavements. The ladies started back, clutching their long skirts, and the officers escorting them returned the midshipmen's cursory salute with an air of displeasure. The bridge was still crowded with people watching the picket-boats scurrying between the quay and the French destroyers. The guests were being taken to a full-dress luncheon, the officers to the Duma, and the sailors to the People's Palace.

"They'll stand gaping there till night," Bobrinsky said, leaning back against the upholstered seat. "It's remarkable how fond the people are of shows and things. What makes Petersburgers crowd round anything you can imagine—a fallen horse, a man painting a house, a student with a red flag? If you ask me it's because we have so few public amusements. Every piddling little thing becomes an event. Dad is right—he says the people don't need much—just bread and circuses, therefore we should have more religious processions and parades."

"Bread, did you say?" Yuri smiled knowingly. Bobrinsky's father was a reactionary Duma deputy and Yuri's sarcastic question was meant to show that he knew his onions.

"There's not enough bread in Russia to go round, my dear chap, and it's no secret," Bobrinsky laughed. "Today, though, the gapers are handy—the French will take them for public rejoicings. Hi, old chap, hard apart, we're going along the embankment! Let's have a look at the embassy while we're at it, eh, Livitin?"

Before Yuri could voice assent, the cabman turned round, saying:

"Can't go along the embankment, sir. Not allowed."

"Nonsense! What d'you mean, not allowed?"

"Police orders, sir. The inspector gave notice yesterday that only private turnouts would be allowed. Cabbies would be fined ten rubles."

"Ah, well. What about Nevsky?"

"Nevsky? Certainly, sir. Nevsky's all right, sir. Anywhere but the President's route—they're afraid o' bombs, sir."

"Silly ass!" Bobrinsky said with unfeigned amusement. "Why should anyone throw bombs at him? What's he done to them?"

"I don't know what he's done, sir, but I do know that the authorities are jumpy," the cabman said, holding up his end of the conver-

sation with obvious pleasure. "I don't blame 'em, seeing as what's going on, with everyone on strike, even the trams stopped. There'll be bomb-throwing, all right. German spies about, the inspector said."

"*Il a raison, cet homme,*" Bobrinsky said, carrying on in French.

Yuri broke out into a cold sweat. He knew just enough French to be able to skim through a racy novel without the help of a dictionary. Nevertheless, covering up his intense concentration with a careless smile, he managed to understand most of what Bobrinsky was telling him. And the gist of it was that public opinion considered all these strikes to be the work of German agents.

"Germany, you see, is concerned about our attitude to the Sarajevo incident. War is round the corner, my dear fellow. They're out to make trouble for us at home. Dad says we're on the razor's edge, with revolution on our left, and war on our right. We must thank God for Poincaré's visit—between you and me, the Emperor had strong doubts on the question of war. France's aid has come at the right time. I have no doubt that they're after Poincaré. The function at the Yelagin Palace has been cancelled, you know."

"You don't say so?" Yuri said, although he had no means of knowing that such a function was going to be held.

"It's a fact. Vendorf insisted on it. He said he would have enough police to form a line up to the embassy, but a four-mile wall of policemen all along the Kamennostrovsky was more than he could manage. He's right, of course. Germany would grudge no money for a good shot to send those two flags flying in opposite directions," Bobrinsky said, pointing to the shaft-bow.

"Our countries are united by gold, not by sentiment, therefore nothing can part us now, because gold is stronger than sentiment," Yuri said slowly in rather a flutter at having coped successfully with such a long and elegant French sentence.

Bobrinsky glanced at him with surprised approval.

"Ah!" he said, thoughtfully, "that's a profound thought. You mean the loans?"

Yuri meant nothing of the sort. He had read the phrase recently in a smutty French novel, where it was uttered to her jealous thief of a lover by a cynical cocotte. Yuri had not been able to think of any suitable reply in French and had used the phrase with a slight change, substituting the word "countries" for the inappropriate word "hearts". He did not quite understand what had so impressed Bobrinsky, so he smiled meaningly and hastily switched back to Russian.

"I don't think any attempt on his life would affect our friendly relations," he said, regretting that he had got into such depths. "He's

not a king. They'll choose another spokesman, that's all! The Sarajevo incident is much more serious. There you have a real cause of war—the assassination of the Heir Apparent."

But Bobrinsky was not listening.

"'Gold is stronger than sentiment'," he repeated, turning the words over in his mouth. "That's a stinger. I congratulate you, Livitin—you possess the art of conversational wit! Devilishly subtle! I'll put it into circulation in the drawing-rooms this very evening. I say, what are you doing tomorrow?" he added suddenly, taking stock of Livitin as if he had never seen him before.

"Same as you—going back to the ship," Yuri said, smiling.

"Sailoring, confound it! Yes, of course.... I'm not inviting you today—it's a regular hurrah's nest. Dad's dining at the Town Hall, and my sisters, of course, have been invited to the embassy. What a pity.... Anyway, as soon as this beastly cruise is over you must come and have dinner with us. You'll meet some interesting people."

Yuri flushed with pleasure, but he gave no sign.

"Thanks, I'll be delighted," he said coolly, his eye wandering over the well-dressed crowd, who stood staring at the Town Hall decorations. The usual St. Petersburg crowd. Vapid young men in flashy ties, scrawny gushing girls in white hats; probably all the Izvekofs would be there too, staring at the French officers as they drove up, and waiting for Poincaré, who was not coming at all (as Yuri himself had just learned from Bobrinsky).

"It's starting a bit too early, this war," Bobrinsky said ruefully.

Yuri was about to agree and point out in confirmation that the new battleships were still under construction and it was only a month since the submarines at Revel had been laid down, but the count's thoughts pursued a sinuous path of their own.

"Just think, three years to wait for promotion. We'll kiss the post, it'll all be over by that time. Sazonov says it won't take more than eight months to carve Germany up between us and France. But"—and here Bobrinsky smiled premonitorily—"I keep telling everybody that we have nothing against the German and Austrian eagles, and after the war we'll magnanimously return their *Im-peria** to them...."

"What?" Yuri said blankly.

Bobrinsky flung himself back in the seat, delighted.

"Their *feathers*!" he explained with a chuckle. "We'll return their feathers to them, and take all the rest for ourselves. Not bad, eh?"

* An untranslatable pun on the Russian word *imperia* (empire), the second syllable of which (*peria*) means "feathers".—Tr.

This heavy-handed pun was evidently the count's own perpetration. Yuri smiled politely. Bobrinsky was not distinguished at College for a nimble mind, and the pun merely confirmed Yuri in his belief that he could hold up his end of the conversation in company just as well as Bobrinsky. After this invitation to dinner, however, the count's chatter did not seem half as empty and boastful. It had acquired significant meaning for him now. The glamorous world of St. Petersburg high society, the sparkling reflection of its salons, where the Foreign Minister set the dates of war and peace, this strange world peopled with men of moneyed might standing close to government circles, became, for the first time, something real and accessible to Yuri. The mysterious life within those portals threw open its high doors before him, beckoning and frightening. He yearned for the cruise to end quickly for fear that Bobrinsky would forget his invitation.

Yuri saw himself ascending the marble staircase, saw himself sitting at the dinner table, cool, self-possessed, playing with words, saw himself in a sumptuous drawing-room in the company of people upon whose mere glance much depended. He impressed them all with his brilliant wit, shrewd judgements, and original ideas (at this game Yuri could beat any long-shanks of an aristocrat hands down!). "Who is that witty midshipman?" people whisper. "That boy has a brilliant career before him." They ask to be introduced to him and ply him with invitations. He is a shining social success. A girl he had never met before, a girl with pale delicate features, rises before him and lays title and estates at his feet, captivated by his caustic wit; someone's influential wife beams at him across the table; the Minister of Marine leans over towards the host, his keen old-man's eye fixed on Yuri's face; already the wide road of influential connections which had led many a midshipman to the aide-de-camp's aiguillettes and private carriage lay open before him.

The cabman's voice, saying: "Where to, sir?" brought Yuri down to earth. He found himself in Liteiny Prospekt with Bobrinsky chattering away at his side. Yuri sighed and reached for his wallet.

"That red building further down, entrance on the left. So long, Bobrinsky, I enjoyed your company. Taking the steamboat out tomorrow? Let's go together."

"Splendid," the other said, holding out his hand. "Don't forget, Livitin—first time we get leave, you dine with us."

The cab pulled up at an imposing entrance; behind the plate glass of the doors a liveried hall-porter stroked a bushy well kept beard. Bobrinsky glanced curiously at the doorway.

"Thanks, we'll arrange it later on," Livitin said as he sprang to the pavement and handed the cabman a five-ruble note. "Take the gentleman wherever he wants to go. Oh, nonsense!" he checked the count with a deprecatory wave of the hand. "I was hiring the cab in any case. So long!"

They saluted each other. The horse, which had been pawing the ground, started off at a brisk pace.

Yuri walked towards the door, but suddenly stopped at a photographer's showcase and examined the face of a woman displayed in the centre. He contemplated it for quite a time, long enough to allow the cab to pass out of sight. Having made sure of this, Yuri walked past the entrance and the picturesque hall-porter behind it and turned into the yard through the gateway.

It was unseemly for a midshipman to sit anywhere in a theatre higher than the first circle or to be seen in the street without white kid gloves on; it was disgraceful to haggle with a cabman and shameful to be seen wearing "issue" boots. Such was the unwritten law of the Naval College. Yuri, who upheld this law with the religious zeal of a novitiate, with all the vehemence of youthful vanity, cursed the gateway: a midshipman of the Naval College and a flat in the backyard were incompatible notions. Yuri had hit on the photograph trick in a moment of sheer desperation, when, walking down Liteiny with some College cronies, his reputation as a brilliant midshipman was threatened to be destroyed, swallowed up in the dark maw of the gateway.

Cursing it for the hundredth time, Yuri crossed the hateful yard towards one of the inner entrances. It was the typical courtyard of a St. Petersburg apartment-house. In the middle of it some sickly looking screechy children were maltreating a cat, to whose tail they had tied a piece of paper; nurses sat on a boxlike zinc dustbin, picking their employers to pieces; the windows of the flats were open and a medley of sounds filled the five-storeyed well—two or three pianos vied with a gramophone, and the sound of a shrill altercation issued from one of the kitchens. The dingy staircase drew a grimace of disgust from Yuri: the stale smell of cats, onions and God knows what else seemed to hang over the place. He swore inwardly, and bore his sword and outraged dignity to the third floor.

As a matter of fact there was no smell on the stairs at all and the dinginess was due to the stained glass used in the windows for decorative effect; the brass plates on the doors shone with respectability, and the doors themselves were covered with leatherette studded with porcelain-headed nails. If this were a street entrance,

Yuri would have suffered no pangs. But the fact that it was in a courtyard—albeit asphalted and perfectly respectable, albeit right in the centre of the town within a stone's throw of Nevsky—made him feel as though he had been shabbily treated. Living in a courtyard was so terribly middle class! But what could you do? The old hag was so tight with her money, so obstinate!

Again Yuri was wrong. Anna Izvekova, the widow of an army doctor, who had had a decent practice and left her four grown-up children and a bundle of gilt-edged bonds, had nothing of the hag about her at all. She was a jolly old lady who loved Yuri as a son, and it was through no fault of hers that Yuri had nowhere to spend his leave but in her family. As for the main entrance, she justifiably jibbed at the idea of paying an extra 600 rubles a year for the hall-porter's beard and livery. The tragedy of a midshipman condemned to live in a yard naturally left her cold. Besides, Yuri never broached the subject, embarrassed as he was by the knowledge that he was a stranger in the house and had no reasonable grounds for complaint other than that of a midshipman's wounded pride, which Mme. Izvekova simply couldn't understand and laughed at as "guardsman's snobbery". The phrase was first coined on the occasion when Yuri refused to go with the Izvekovs to hear Chaliapin. Mme. Izvekova, a passionate lover of the theatre, managed to wangle tickets for all the best shows at the Mariinsky, but they were always gallery seats; she said she would rather hear Chaliapin five times upstairs than once downstairs. But Yuri flatly refused to go to the gallery. The whole family argued with him, but he stood his ground, and spent the whole evening alone, bored and miserable, upholding the honour of the uniform although he was dying to go to the theatre.

They were a long time answering the door, and Yuri was beginning to wonder if they had not all gone to the country cottage. He rang again, and to his relief, heard footsteps.

A young housemaid in a pink blouse that clung softly to her rounded breasts opened the door.

"Oh, Yuri Petrovich," she exclaimed. "What a surprise! Have you come straight from sea? How sunburnt you are! And how you've grown! Let me hang your sword up."

"Good afternoon, Natasha," Yuri said, handing her his sword. He had always disapproved of Natasha's garrulity but then Mme. Izvekova could never keep the servants in their places; he had had a job teaching her to call him by his name and patronymic, instead of just Yuri. He looked at himself in the mirror and noted with satisfaction that the cruise had really improved his looks.

"Why were you so long answering the door? Anyone at home?"

"Nobody. The young lady and gentlemen have gone to see the Frenchmen, and Madame's gone down to the country. Will you have some tea, Yuri Petrovich? Dinner will be some time yet."

"No.... On second thoughts, I think I will," Yuri said, going into the dining-room. Natasha went past him, and his eye rested on her involuntarily. She had been occupying his thoughts now for some time. It seemed to him that she picked him out from the two Izvekoff schoolboys, and even from their student brother. Not that anyone could compare schoolboys to a midshipman!

The dining-room was a replica of the general run of St. Petersburg middle-class dining-rooms. The uncomfortable fragile furniture of the inevitable *style moderne*, upholstered in green, was arranged with pretensions to coziness. The piano stood open, and the black caviare of difficult passages was thickly strewn over the open sheets of music: apparently Polina was still attending Conservatoire classes. Albums lay about on round little tables, housing aunts and uncles, and—in enormous editions—little Valentines, Polinas, Pyotrs and Mishas; they were photographed every year, their steady growth recorded for posterity. Yuri sighed. He recalled the dainty salons of Helsingfors, and turned to go to his room, when he remembered that the flat was empty, and went instead to Polina's room to investigate.

Here everything bespoke elegance and good taste. In a recess, pink and feathery, stood a bed under a virginal lace bedspread. The dressing-table with an oval mirror framed in muslin, holding little jars, scent bottles, ivory elephants and bowls, stood in the middle of the wall like an altar. Yuri listlessly picked up a scent bottle and smelt the stopper: it smelt sweetly of lily of the valley. He thought of Irina and of the ineffable fragrance which she exuded. He smiled and put the naive bottle back in its place.

The writing table at the window wobbled on its curved rickety legs, which were unfit for work. A miniature desk-set of pink stone consisting of toylike inkpots, candlesticks and paper-weights was arranged with meticulous care on the red moiré-covered table. The remaining free space was cluttered with portraits in round and oval frames: Sobinov with the saccharine profile of Lohengrin, a frowning Beethoven, waiting for over three years now for Polina to master the Moonlight Sonata, Maximov, the film lover, in immaculate evening-dress and wistful smile, Uncle Sergei in morning-coat and spotted tie, Nadson in the last stage of consumption.

Yuri raised an eyebrow: on the spot where Lieutenant Livitin had once surveyed this assemblage of Polina's idols and which had

stood empty for a year, a dashing lieutenant of the dragoons now stood twirling his moustache. So that was the way the wind blew! Alec Pakhomov had at last filled the vacancy in the maiden's broken heart!

Yuri laughed. His reconnaissance was completed.

Polina, who was tragically approaching the age when that fragrant word "girl" gives place to the ugly label "old maid", had every reason to suffer the torments of a broken heart. While still at school, she had been destined for Nikolai Livitin, and it was taken for granted that he would marry her as soon as he was promoted to officer's rank, as a natural culmination of their youthful correspondence and duets at the piano. Promotion had come, charming Nikolai the midshipman became a brilliant sub-lieutenant, he never failed to visit the Izvekops when he was in town, and even continued playing the duets with her—but with never a hint of any proposal of marriage. Polina began to pine. She wept more often at the opera over the soulful *fermata* of the leading tenors, practised her scales in the morning with diminished zeal, and all but threw up the Conservatoire. Then, pulling herself together, she plunged violently into a study of High German. This raised her so much in her own estimation that during one of Livitin's visits she demanded an explanation from him. Yuri knew none of the details, but he guessed that his brother, discovering new wide vistas and new acquaintances, and breathing the heady atmosphere of Helsingfors restaurants, had apparently found a new criterion for the choice of a wife. Polina, with her sentimentality, her passion for music (chiefly opera and Sobinov), her shy disposition and melancholy profile resembling a character out of a Turgenev novel, did not fit in with either Helsingfors or a naval officer's career. Besides, she had passed her twenty-fifth birthday, and her temper as well as her looks had not improved. Musical she may have been, but when irritated her voice took on a shrill edge. High German was her last card, standing as it did for a leaning towards serious learning characteristic of the modern cultured woman and wife of a naval officer.

She had played that card. What Nikolai said to her that fateful evening, Yuri never knew, but towards the morning Polina all but poisoned herself. At daybreak she smashed a water-bottle and screamed so frantically that the whole household sprang out of bed and rushed to her room in their night attire (all except Nikolai, who managed to slip on his trousers and tunic—apparently a habit cultivated by night alarms). Polina, in the most seductive disarray, lay in a faint clutching a phial with the terrifying inscription

"Arsenic" on it. Apparently her resolution had failed her, and she had lost consciousness before losing life. The contents of the phial had not been touched. Quickly sizing up the situation, the lieutenant calmed the sobbing Mine. Izvekova and carried the semi-nude figure back to the bed with no quickening of the pulse. Coming to herself, Polina said languidly: "Where am I?" Nikolai coolly informed her that she was at home, in her bed, that she had frightened her mother out of her wits, and that one should be able to control one's nerves. Polina fell, sobbing, on her mother's breast, and all tiptoed out of the room. In the passage Nikolai caught his brother by the shirt and warned him solemnly:

"Yuri, never play duets with marriageable girls—you're liable to be misinterpreted."

Next morning the lieutenant rejoined his ship, and Polina removed his portrait from the table, and started practising "*The Death of Isolde*", her every look and gesture saying that nobody understood her and she was doomed to perish in silence. Among the family a discreet silence was maintained on this domestic tragedy. Yuri still spent his leave with the Izvekofs, but felt rather constrained.

The discovery of Pakhomov's portrait put him in a good humour. He decided to tell his brother in his next letter that the broken heart had been healed by the salve of a cavalryman.

Personally, Yuri fully approved of Nikolai's action in backing out. For one thing, no person could seriously believe a man was obliged to marry a girl because he had held her hand in the moonlight when he was eighteen. Secondly, Polina was anything but a good match. There was something about her that was stuffily "middle class"—Yuri's favourite expression. She was a typically commonplace St. Petersburg product, a gushing, sighing, music-playing miss infatuated with the arts, but vitally deficient in the qualities that went to make a naval officer's wife. Everything about her was hopelessly humdrum and drab, like everything else in this courtyard apartment. Not so Irina. She was a brilliant woman, who could turn any man's head (Yuri was in love with her himself). He couldn't understand why Nikolai was dawdling with their marriage. Yuri looked forward to the event—he would be able to spend his leave with her (Irina had two flats, one in St. Petersburg, the other in Helsingfors), and besides, being hard up, this would be a help to him—till his promotion, of course. Yuri did not know the extent of Irina's means—he never touched on this delicate subject with his brother—but he did know that they were considerable. She lived in

grand style and was known in Helsingfors as "the brilliant widow".

The lack of money was more mortifying to Yuri than the indignity of the courtyard. As a rule, he was always out of pocket, no matter how much money came his way. Although the Naval College, in appreciation of his father's services and St. George's Cross, educated and trained Yuri at the public expense, keeping him in clothes, shoes and food, and even treating him to free seats in the government box at the theatre, pocket money was nevertheless a necessity. His was made up of fifteen rubles a month from his father's emeritus pension and odd contributions from his brother amounting to the same sum. Out of these thirty rubles a month he had to buy gloves, shoes, and fine socks (if he did not want to look like a slop-room gawk); he had to order handmade cigarettes even if they were not from Count Bobrinsky's high-class tobacconist, and these cost no less than eight rubles per thousand; he had to pay the orderly three rubles a month for cleaning and brushing his boots and clothes. Why, there was no end of expenses a midshipman's uniform obliged him to incur, some of them quite unforeseen, like the five rubles he had paid the cabman that day—incidentally, his last. He would have to borrow again from Mme. Izvekova, and hear the old tiresome phrase about living "beyond his means". As if there was anyone in St. Petersburg who lived "within his means"! Nikolai himself was no doubt deeply in debt, for all that he sometimes reproved Yuri for throwing money about. He did not live on his pay alone, surely!

His brother's marriage would put an end to Yuri's embarrassments, which were all the more humiliating in that the Izvekofs belonged to a pattern of living that fell far short of Naval College standards. The resulting disparity threw a damp upon his spirits and made him count the days till his promotion.

Promotion!

That remote blissful vision, promising deliverance, rebirth—a thrilling leap into a shining new world, escape from the stuffy narrow world of the Izvekofs. Like Polina, who longed for marriage, which would cast on her the borrowed radiance of her husband's name and turn an obscure girl into a lady of fashion, so did Yuri long for that far-off day when the officer's frock coat would rest on his shoulders with the sweet weight of a bride's wedding-dress. But whereas Polina was obliged to practise scales and winning smiles, to calculate every gesture and every word, and even study High German, and tremble lest all these stratagems should prove inadequate to lay the spectre of old-maidenhood, Yuri did not have to

make any special effort to win his wedding-dress. Promotion awaited him as naturally and painlessly as a caterpillar awaited its transformation into a butterfly. It only needed time—six weeks for the caterpillar, three years for Yuri—to assume, together with the brilliant raiment, all the rights and privileges won before him by generations of the officers' caste.

But three whole years! Thirty-six months, a thousand and one nights without the comfort of Scheherazade's tales, a thousand and one days of schoolboy life, as drab as army cloth! It seemed such an unendurably long time, especially on days like this, which offered such a glaring contrast: the splendour of the President's reception and the silent emptiness of this courtyard flat; Count Bobrinsky's invitation to dinner and Yuri's last five rubles.

His mind occupied with these gloomy thoughts, he went into the boys' room. There were two beds there—Pyotr's and Misha's, and a rug-covered sofa on which Yuri slept when he came once a week from College. On the table, instead of textbooks, lay the paraphernalia of summertime—magazines, a tennis racket, an open book by Dumas, cigarette papers and tobacco emptied on a newspaper. Yuri yawned, picked up the magazine and stretched himself on the sofa. He felt bored to death, but with twenty kopeks in your pocket where could you go?

Natasha, coming in to say that tea was served, was a welcome sight.

"Wait a minute, Natasha. Don't go away. When are they coming back? The place is so lonely."

"I don't know, Yuri Petrovich," Natasha said, turning round at the door. The tantalising curves of the pink blouse caught his eye again. "I feel lonely too, sitting here all alone," she added.

"Alone? Where's cook?"

"She got leave to go to the People's Palace as soon as she'd cooked the dinner. They say there are celebrations there in honour of the Frenchmen."

So the flat was empty! Yuri's hands suddenly became clammy.

"Oh, I see . . . celebrations, you say. . . . Why didn't you go?"

"And who'll mind the flat?" Natasha said, smiling. "I've been out, though. Had a pretty long walk too—all the way to the dress-maker's on Vyborgskaya. Why aren't the trams running, Yuri Petrovich?"

"The trams? I don't know," Yuri said, his heart hammering wildly. "On account of the celebrations, I suppose. . . ."

"I heard some talk in the street about there going to be a riot,"

Natasha said in an awed voice, leaning forward. The blouse came undone at her throat from the movement, and the sudden vision of white body hit Yuri in the eyes. "All the shops are shut, I had to go round to the back to get the rolls, they're all afraid. And the police—they're all over the place! Cossacks on the bridge, at the station too—it gives you the creeps!"

"Cossacks? So what?" Yuri answered, trying hard to remember those easy-conquest recipes which his more experienced messmates had communicated to him in the smoking-room. They had sounded very simple there, but here with Natasha, alone in an empty flat, she seemed remotely inaccessible, and time was flying . . . (audacity, damn it, audacity! Women loved audacity—not ladies, of course, but these housemaids, nurses, milliners . . .).

"Why should the cossacks frighten you?" he went on, looking her straight in the face. "They don't touch girls . . . especially pretty girls like you."

"Oh, don't they! You should have seen what happened in Nizhegorodskaya!" Natasha cried, throwing her hands up in horror.

Yuri put his feet down from the sofa.

"Tell me about it. Sit down," he said, making the most of her excitement.

Natasha, deeply agitated, sat down on the edge of the sofa; her full thighs were outlined under her thin skirt. Yuri saw the depression between her knees, and caught glimpses of her body through the unbuttoned blouse. He tried to look into her eyes and nodded his head at her hurried speech, to which he was listening with but half an ear. The words reached him as if from a hazy distance, muted and dimmed by the thought that hammered at his temples. First he must joke with her, give the conversation a playful turn, then stroke—what? Her hands? Her leg? Or should he simply take hold of her breast? Natasha was as excited as he was, that was obvious. But how was he to go about it?

Natasha *was* excited, but not for the reason Yuri thought. The dreadful incident she had witnessed from the window of the dress-maker, who was finishing Polina's white pelerinc, rose before her again in all its lurid details. The strikers in the street were standing about in groups, laughing and glancing in the direction of Liteiny Bridge. In one of the groups closest to the window stood a plainly dressed woman, who kept adjusting the shawl on her head. She was holding by the hand a fair-haired girl of about four in a bright red frock. The girl was sucking a lollipop, examining it from time to time to see how much was left. Two cabs came out of a side street

with French naval officers sitting in them (so thought Natasha, but they were only petty officers); they were mustachioed, tipsy gentlemen, each with a lady in his arms. . . .

"Some ladies!" Yuri inserted, trying to guide the conversation. "Call them ladies? They must have been . . . er . . . you know, cabaret singers."

"Wait a minute," Natasha dismissed the interruption. Her hand touched his by accident, and he hastily detained it in his.

"No, *you* wait a minute! Those ladies of yours must have spent the night with them somewhere in a hotel. Did you notice whether they looked tired? The French are gay dogs, especially after they've been at sea—you know what I mean? Did you hear this story about them?"

"Oh, wait a minute! Who cares whether they're ladies or not," Natasha interrupted him impatiently. Some gruesome memory widened her eyes and made her draw closer; she even lowered her voice. "So there they were sprawling in the cabs, tipsy, cuddling those ladies, when all of a sudden a student goes and jumps on a curbstone, shouting 'Long live France!' and then starts singing that—what d'you call it?—Polina keeps playing it nowadays?"

"The *Marseillaise*," Yuri prompted, drawing closer too, his whole face expressing keen interest; he even placed his hand on Natasha's shoulder as if hurrying her on. "Well, the *Marseillaise*, and what next?"

"The officers stood up in the cabs and saluted and smiled. People started tossing them in the air and cheering, and carried them on their shoulders to the bridge, with the whole crowd following them. You never saw such a crowd! All of 'em laughing, the workmen too, and everyone singing, and that student in front waving his arms about, laughing his head off."

Yuri cursed himself for a slow-witted fool: he should have seized the opportunity, at the word "cuddling", to throw his arm round Natasha with a laugh, saying: "How did they cuddle—like this?" The rest would have been easy sailing. What a gaw-gaw! He slid his hand down cautiously to be ready for the next opportunity.

The ambiguity of the *Marseillaise* sung here, at the bridge, was glaringly apparent. Played by the band at the royal landing-stage, it was the national anthem of a friendly power; coming from the throats of the workers of the Vyborgskaya Storona, it was a banned revolutionary song. The one drew the hands of the gendarmes to their caps, the other to their whips. Those who were leading the crowd towards the bridge made the most of this situation; the smiling

Frenchmen in their arms became a shield against the police bullets and cossacks' whips.

The police were perplexed: the crowd was advancing upon them, and they could do nothing about it. The shouts of "Long live the French Republic!", the French flags torn from the house brackets by the workers, the French officers overwhelmed by this sudden ovation (Frenchmen! Officers!) served as a protective armour to the crowd of strikers, who were not, under any circumstances, to be allowed into the centre of the city. They laughed in the faces of the policemen, who glanced uneasily at their officers. The latter swore under their breath, their hands held respectfully to the peaks of their caps, and looked at the Commissioner. The Commissioner bit his lip till it bled. Three times his hand jerked to give the signal and his spurs dug into his horse's flanks, but each time he checked himself at the sight of the drunken French oafs who little suspected what a mess their crazy patriotic fervour had caused. It wasn't too late yet to break up the crowd, but what about those Frenchmen? What excuse would the Governor make at the embassy? Frenchmen, damn them! Officers, blast 'em! If only they'd been bluejackets! Coming out here from Nevsky with their tarts! And again he spurred his horse and galloped to the bridge, overtaking the crowd, and the police made way for the huge crowd, to the amazement of Colonel Filonov.

Natasha saw nothing of this. Nor could she see the livid face of the Chief of Police as, without respect of person, he let fly at the Commissioner with a juicy oath and promptly took charge himself, a practised hand in the diplomatic art of street fighting. She did not see the sudden scuffle in the front ranks, did not hear the murderous French in which the Commissioner explained to the tipsy officers that the mob were all drunk, and that the ovation was likely to have a tragic sequel in keeping with the usual temper of the drunken Russian crowd. Nor did she see the expectant glance with which Colonel Filonov followed the cabs as they scuttled off over the bridge with the grateful Frenchmen. She did not see what happened next, when the *Marseillaise*, in the absence of the Frenchmen, became the banned song of revolution, and everything having clicked into place, the Chief of Police nodded to the cossack captain, and the cossacks leaned forward in their saddles, raised their whips and charged full-tilt.

As for Yuri, he did not even see what Natasha was telling him, stumbling over her words. He saw her unfeigned agitation that brought tears to her eyes and made her bosom heave under the pink blouse, and he hastened to comfort her, stroking her shoulder,

her hot shapely back, and even touching her breast. His heart was thumping.

The crowd gasped, trapped in the narrow street, and made a dash for the side turnings and gateways, crowded into house entrances and huddled against the walls. Right under the dressmaker's window a group of five or six people ran about in a panic. A woman in a blue dress, stunned with fear, clasped to her breast the little girl who had been sucking the lollipop; she was screaming now, head thrown back and mouth wide open. The horses' hooves thundered on the roadway and the pavement. A young cossack galloped in front, laying about with his whip on turned backs. The street howled, shrieked and cursed. Stones pulled up from the roadway flew at the cossacks; the maddened horses plunged and reared; their infuriated riders spurred them on. A stone grazed the head of the young cossack and knocked off his cap. He swore and began slashing at the faces of the crowd with his whip, throwing his horse on its haunches and trampling the people down.

"She rushed to the entrance, holding up the child, but the porter—would you believe it, the old devil!—he slammed the door in her face—bang!... shook his head too, nothing doing. The poor woman, she ran across the street—there was a gateway opposite—but that cossack, the one without the cap, dashed up and started slashing at them with his whip—the woman and the child—and the horse reared, trampling them, trampling them. . . ."

Natasha fell on Yuri's shoulder, sobbing. Her hot body pressed against his with sweet abandon. A golden down shimmered on her neck. The smell of new milk—the smell of a clean healthy girl—rose from under the collar of her blouse. There was no smell of the kitchen about her, as Yuri had feared. He raised her tear-stained face to his, her small breast at last cupped full in his hand.

"What are you crying for? Silly girl! Such a big girl too. . . ."

She sobbed, her eyes shut tight, lips quivering. Yuri bent down and pressed his lips to hers in a masterful tantalising kiss, which, he knew from many authorities, no woman could withstand.

It was one of those kisses which society had been given lessons in by decadent Russian *belles lettres*, poetry and art. It was such a kiss, shameless and intoxicating, that Balmont and Mirra Lokhvitskaya sang of, that Anatoly Kamensky and Yuri Slyozkin wrote stories about, and Artsibashev, Verbitskaya and Fonvizin devoted whole novels to; Ilanzhonkov's "Golden Series" made close-ups of it; lovers sang about it in operas; and Yuri Morfessy and Sabinin swooned in ecstasy over it in passionate romances. Yuri worked at Natasha's lips

according to all the established rules of these authorities. He seared, he crushed, he clung to her yielding open mouth with hungry, insatiable lips. His hand roamed over her body with a rough urgent caress, which, of course, Natasha, like all girls, secretly desired. Gently, he drew her suddenly relaxed body down onto the sofa, waiting confidently for the moment when that mad kiss should take effect and Natasha's arms would twine themselves in utter abandon around his neck and the world would go whirling about them.

But nothing of the kind happened. Natasha disengaged her arm and pushed his forehead back with a violent thrust. Yuri's lips slid away from Natasha with a loud smacking sound. Natasha broke away from him, wiping her mouth and pulling down her skirt.

"What a dirty wolf, may God forgive me for saying it!" she said, without mincing matters. "What a slobbering pig! Calls himself a gentleman too! Ugh!"

She actually spat and ran out, slamming the door.

Yuri was crushed. He sat red as a beetroot, head bowed, angry, perplexed and deeply humiliated. The spittle frothed, cooling, on his white trousers near the knee. He searched the room with his eyes, and tearing a leaf out of an exercise-book, carefully wiped his trousers. His hands shook, and he felt like crying or cursing in the foulest language.

"Touchy little beast!" he said aloud by way of self-comfort. "Ironclad, fancies herself the young lady, does she?"—then added, by afterthought: "The bitch!"

He was still smarting from the rebuff. The silly prude! Who didn't know that maids were taken into homes to keep young men like him from making doubtful acquaintances on the side? The girls themselves knew perfectly well what they were letting themselves in for when they took on such jobs.

The doorbell broke the thread of his thoughts. He waited for Natasha's steps, but none came. Probably sulking or crying—who cares! He went into the hall.

The flat instantly filled with the sounds of hilarious greetings, laughter and the overflow of gay animation from the festive streets. Even Polina was animated and flushed with excitement. Uncle Sergei, his bulky figure screening his two nephews, bore down on Yuri with outspread arms, rolling out in his mellow lawyer's baritone:

"Well I never! If this isn't our good old admiral! Polina, darling, send Natasha for some wine, we must drink the health of our young sea captain!"

Uncle Sergei belonged to that class of people who form the simple but solid backcloth for the shining stars of the capital's *beau-monde* and *demi-monde*. It is they who fill the pit in the theatres, the galleries in the Duma during sensational sessions, and the lower stands at the races; they who dine at the Aquarium and lunch at Cubat's, who subscribe to *Novoye Vremya* and *Rech*, who order their clothes at expensive tailors', who have a private drawer with their own towels at the hairdresser's, and who constitute what is known as "Society". His manner was free and easy, his views moderately liberal, and his tone slightly patronising. The tone was justified, however, by a handsome bachelor apartment in Znamensky Street, and a nest-egg laid up at the Russo-Asiatic Bank in forty years of successful practice at the Bar. Sergei Izvekov had solid connections in St. Petersburg; in business circles he was considered shrewd and progressive; in administrative circles, irreproachable; in bachelor circles, a good boon-companion. In the Izvekofs' home he was received with the respect due to the family's good genius. It was an open secret there that his little hoard would go to his sister's children at his death. His every wish, therefore, was carried out immediately. Polina took off her cute little hat, gave him one of her wraithlike smiles, and wagged a genial forefinger at him:

"You're always trying to find an excuse for drinking, Uncle!"

Izvekov tossed his gloves into his bowler and put his stick in the corner, its silver handle in the form of a borzoi's head resting against the wall.

"Dinner without wine is like the love of a peasant woman—wholesome, satisfying, but insipid," he said with a twinkle. Polina blushed and the two schoolboys guffawed. Yuri forced a smile into his face. Uncle Sergei was fond of questionable jokes and enjoyed embarrassing his pretty niece. He chuckled as he followed her into the drawing-room smoothing out the tails of his elegant morning coat and chatting with all of them at once in his bland man-of-the-world manner.

"So we're going to fight, admiral? Have you seen the papers? War is round the corner. Austria is asking for it. Come over here, Miss Beautiful," he added to Natasha.

He opened a well-filled wallet, and slapping it on the palm of his hand, gave Natasha instructions what wine to fetch and where to buy it. Yuri, trying to avoid looking at her, crossed over to the piano, and found in Misha an eager listener to his account of the reception ceremony at the royal landing-stage. Polina, who had freshened herself up after the dust of the streets, came into the room, a slim, delicate, dreamy figure smelling of lily of the valley. The

conversation turned on the French visitors, the salutes and festivities, in the course of which Yuri gave himself the pleasure of repeating Bobrinsky's anecdote about the red colours. Sergei Izvekov sat down beside him.

"What's the matter with Natasha?" he interrupted with the easy assurance of one accustomed to command attention. "She's been crying, her eyes are red. Is this your doing, midshipman? Sailors are the very devil with girls!"

"Oh, Uncle, how can you!" Polina said, blushing again.

Yuri summoned all his composure.

"Soft-hearted creature!" he said with an angry shrug. "She saw the police dispersing some strikers today and it upset her. Somebody or other was trampled—some woman, I believe—hence the tears. . . ."

"Oh, Yuri!" Polina cried in a shocked voice. "How can you speak of it so lightly! It's terrible! Trampling down helpless people!"

As a matter of fact, Yuri did not approve of the cossack method of dealing with crowds; he thought they discredited the uniform. But he couldn't very well be expected to take sides with the strikers in an argument. Besides, the thought of the rebuff he had suffered still rankled.

"For one thing, they weren't as helpless as you think. They threw stones, I was told. Natasha didn't see everything, the little fool; of course, they were warned, told to disperse. And then—don't we all know that these strikes are the work of German agents, a preparation for war?"

Sergei Izvekov looked up at him indulgently and shook his head.

"Come, come, admiral, you don't believe that fairy-tale, surely? Germans my grandmother! It's the beginning of the revolution! The government's mad. It's blinded by the spectre of power and thinks it can stem the tide of popular wrath with whips and salvoes. It doesn't want to understand that Russia has grown out of her policeman's swaddling-clothes, that the old absolutist regime is bursting at every rotten seam, like a caftan on a growing giant."

"He's off now!" Misha whispered, leaning over to Yuri. "You've got him wound up. I wish Valentin was here to argue with him. He'll talk us to death."

Yuri gave a nod of sympathetic understanding, but Uncle Sergei rambled on, never doubting that he was being listened to.

"The tsarist ministers appointed by the palace clique are unpopular and can enjoy no authority among the people. But the government doesn't want to see that. Terrible, tragic blindness! As if Russia's tremendous creative forces are incapable of advancing genuine statesman without hereditary titles from the midst of the progressive

intelligentsia! Give Russia a responsible ministry, clear out those titled swindlers, give us a parliament—and tomorrow will see the end of the strikes and riots.”

“But we have the Duma. Isn’t that a parliament? It’s good enough,” Yuri said, doing his best with an uninteresting and unfamiliar subject.

“The Duma!” Izvekov sneered. “A Duma in which Milyukov has his mouth shut for daring to speak the truth, and in which Purishkevich’s reactionary monkey tricks are tolerated! Sheer humbug, my dear boy! A Duma which has no right to demand an account from thieving ministers. A Duma in which the deputies—the nation’s conscience!—are not allowed to open their mouths. . . .”

“A ruble, Uncle!” Misha suddenly exclaimed, holding out his hand. “I’ll sell it to you! This one hits it right on the nail!”

Izvekov turned his full face towards him:

“Tell it to me first.”

“Down with the money! You’ll cheat me, like last time.”

“It was you who cheated last time—you cribbed it from *Satirikon*,” Uncle Sergei said gravely.

“This one’s a crib too, only you don’t know where from. Let’s have the money.”

“If I don’t happen to know it, I’ll pay you the money, honestly I will,” Uncle Sergei said. “I call the admiral here to witness.”

“Oh, all right,” Misha sighed. “Listen on credit:

*“W’ll soon be growing fur, by God,
And though our mouth will stay
That poor old orifice will not
Any longer get the say. . . .”*

Izvekov maintained a thoughtful silence, the while he worked his lips, as if testing the quatrain on his tooth, like a coin. Then he nodded his head approvingly, pulled out his pocket diary and opened it at the page bearing the heading: “Aphorisms and *bons mots*”.

“Dictate,” he said, unscrewing his pencil.

Misha began to dictate, winking at Yuri. Uncle Sergei collected witty sayings and epigrams to enliven his numerous speeches in court, at banquets, and on the Board of the Nevsky Shipbuilding Yard, where he served as legal adviser. At the Izvekofs’ he had turned this hobby into a game, paying for *bons mots* and quotations collected for him by the family at a tariff rate laid down by Misha.

Yuri drew a sigh of relief. The conversation would seem to have taken a more general turn, and could now be switched over to the royal landing-stage, the days’ festivities, the review at the Kronstadt

roadstead—in a word, to subjects where Yuri would become the centre of attention. The mass of fresh impressions threatened to fade beneath the autumn rain of civic sorrow; to stop that lawyer when he mounted his hobbyhorse was no easy task.

Sergei Izvekov wrote the lines down, smiling to himself.

"Where do they come from?" he asked, when Misha held out a hand for his fee.

"I stole it from Valentin—came across it in his lectures on linguistics. Not bad, isn't it?"

"Not bad at all," Uncle Sergei said bitterly, drawing a silver coin from his waistcoat pocket. "Reaction smothers free thought, gags every utterance, makes a mockery of free speech! We'll soon grow out of the habit of speaking altogether!"

"Not you!" Yuri said to himself ruefully. "You'll spout speeches from the grave, if they stick you into one."

"Parliament!" Izvekov resumed with a sigh, and Yuri nervily tapped his pipe out in the ash-tray. "If the information I have collected were to be disclosed in our 'parliament'... A deadly blow! Damning figures! But who would dare put such a question to the Admiralty, and who would allow it to be put? A whole series of embezzlements, disgusting malpractices, bribery and corruption—all of them unpunished, condoned by Grigorovich—why, it's terrible, outrageous, my young friend! Now look at you—you're preparing to serve under these irresponsible crooks, but do you know that Rear-Admiral Greve, Captain of the Dockyard at Vladivostok, ordered over three thousand tons of weeviled flour to be accepted from a contractor, although the victualling committee had refused to take delivery? How much did he get from the contractor for issuing that order? Do you know that out of the appropriations for ship repairs your Admiralty contrives to buy furniture and chandeliers for the apartment of the Chief of Naval Staff, to build a conservatory for the Captain of the Dockyard at Nikolayev, and a country villa for that Kronstadt idol of yours—Viren. And what a racket there is around the contracts for our new battleships, which have been five years on the stocks already! Four years ago an enormous sum of money was earmarked for building five new destroyers and three submarines in the Black Sea. Where are these vessels, and where is that money, I ask you?"

"Don't ask me," Yuri said with a shrug. "I'm not the Minister. But in brief, I can tell you this: let the cobbler stick to his last. I always smile when I hear civilians getting worked up about naval matters. The funniest part about it is that the people who put those

questions to the Minister don't understand a thing about it. Would you have us disclose all our secrets, plans, and designs, so that tomorrow our enemies may get to know them?"

"What have naval affairs and military secrets got to do with it? Simply, we have the right to demand an efficient fleet for our money, one capable of defending the country. I don't know much about tailoring, but I do know if my morning coat has been well made or not. But if my tailor has charged me thirty rubles, and my neighbour's tailor has made him a similar one for seventeen rubles, then I'm entitled to call mine a fool or a knave. And take the financial genius of our naval authorities: our Navy costs the nation round about seventy million rubles a year, while the Germans maintain a Navy twice the size of ours on the same money. You spend twenty millions a year on cruises in the Gulf of Finland, while the Germans, for the same money, have six squadrons cruising all the oceans. We have had it dinned into our ears that owing to retrenchments in the naval estimates our ships are undermanned, but the figures ruthlessly point to your incompetence: we have forty-seven thousand sailors, while Germany (with twice as many ships, mind you) has forty-six thousand. You're a bad tailor, Admiral Grigorovich! And one does not have to have a naval mind to see why. Shall I tell you why?"

"It's interesting," Yuri said. He was getting angry and tried in vain to find counter arguments. The Naval College taught many things, theology included, but it never touched on financial matters; it was the business of a naval officer to fight, not do business.

"It's our trump card," Uncle Sergei continued complacently. "Compare the tonnage of our fighting ships with that of the foreign navies—if you can give the name 'fighting ship' to such cast-iron old bathtubs as our *Slavas*, *Tsesareviches*, and *Alexanders*, which will be a hundred years old on Saturday, and our cruisers, which will be two hundred the same Saturday, and which a single broadside from a German dreadnought will blow to smithereens—and you will find it to be 260 thousand tons. As for auxiliary craft, such as training-ships, yachts—imperial, ministerial and admirals'—troopships, harbour vessels, and others, which have never mounted a gun, you will find we have as many as 300, if not 310 thousand tons. There's your clue. In Germany this ratio is 610 thousand tons of fighting ships to 90 thousand tons of auxiliary vessels. But England—mistress of the seas, mark you—has only 19 thousand tons of non-effectives, that is, one-sixteenth of our own tonnage! And this vast armada has to be manned, and money has to be spent on fuel, repairs, paint, and what not."

"According to you, then, we don't need a fleet at all!" Yuri flung out. "What right have you to judge whether we need troopships, training-ships, dockyards, or not, when you have no idea about these things?"

"I'm no judge, my dear boy—money's the judge! Money's the criterion of all talent and all incompetence, the litmus paper of all things and values. Debit, credit, balance—that's the searchlight that shows everything up. And the balance shows your crazy expenditure, the expenditure of people who can't count up to a hundred. Staffs and admirals—these are your second cistern of the Danaides. Compare the figures again, always remembering that we have half the number of the fighting ships the Germans have. But they have twelve admirals, while we have twenty-five! They have eighty captains, we have a hundred and fifty! In other words, *one* of their commanding officers does the work of *four* of ours! Just figure out what these three extras cost the nation! You don't have to have any special naval head on your shoulders to clutch it at the sight of such figures."

Izvekov actually clutched his head, shook it sadly, then flung up his hands with a denunciatory gesture. He had every chance of becoming a Duma deputy himself, and keenly regretted that he was unable to bring the house down with this eloquent maiden speech.

Yuri sat red and sulky, at a loss for words. Izvekov's figures were correct. They touched Yuri's professional pride, and this business approach to naval matters called for some appropriate counter argument, but Yuri could think of no reply.

With a wave of the hand Izvekov suddenly dropped his grandiloquent tone.

"Ekh, Yuri, Yuri!" he said simply and earnestly. "When you dig to the core of the matter like this, it makes you clench your fists! You sit there, probably thinking, 'I wish this landlubber wouldn't poke his nose into naval affairs.' But the landlubber's heart bleeds as much as your does when he sees all this, knows it, and can't do anything about it. Russia is like a house without a master, a good, shrewd, thrifty master. The masters are there, but they are not given a chance to build anything. If they were, this Russia of ours would beat France hollow! Look how the Russian muzhik builds his cottage when he comes by some money—with what zeal, love and care he handles every single log, because it's his own, earned by his own sweat. And when he's built it he'll cling to it with all his might. And look at him building a school or a hospital by order of the authorities—the lazy beggar does it slapdash, any old how. The sense

of having something of your own is a great thing! For your admirals and our ministers all this is just the public purse, other people's money. But there are men who look on the Navy as their own household, men who give that Navy their money, their mind and talents. Men whose hearts bleed when they see your admirals frittering it away, stripping it rivet by rivet!"

Yuri was astonished to hear the pain in Uncle Sergei's voice, and he saw him in a new light. He had a vague hunch that it wouldn't be a bad idea to put naval affairs in the hands of men like these. Nikolai, too, beneath his usual mask of cynical indifference, had accused the Admiralty of incompetence.

"Tsushima, Tsushima!" Izvekov continued, dropping back into florid rhetoric and shaking his hands so vehemently that the cuffs rattled like castanets. "Must we have another crushing defeat to teach these gold-braid imbeciles the four rules of arithmetic? Just as before Tsushima, you are maintaining shore establishments, personnel, dockyards, the Admiralty, and your admirals' villas. It's a disgrace! Upon my word of honour, we're suffocating in an atmosphere of incompetence, bribery and crime! Our hands are tied, our mouths are gagged, we're unable to protest against this all-powerful bureaucracy. Why, the government itself is driving us to extremities! The end of it will be that we'll be forced onto the barricades to join those who are now fighting in the working-class districts for freedom and justice!"

Yuri sat smouldering. After Tsushima it had become the fashion to run down the Russian Navy, and this was considered good form among liberal politicians of the type of this lawyer. Yuri tried hard to remember how Nikolai had taken the starch out of this public exposé during a similar argument about the Navy, when the inevitable reference to Tsushima had cropped up. He had floored his opponent with a knockdown argument. It had had something to do with the telephone company, on whose board Izvekov played some sort of role. Japan had offered telephones at a cheap price, but somebody had given somebody else a bribe, and the Navy had received our own telephones, three times as dear and seven times worse. Not being sure of the niceties connected with this bribe and fearing to supply ammunition to his opponent by getting into a muddle on such an unfamiliar question, Yuri was about to give back a boyishly rude answer, when Valentin suddenly came into the room.

During Izvekov's thunderous speech they had not heard the bell ring. Yuri was glad he had come—Valentin was good at arguing with Uncle Sergei, whom he invariably managed to chase up a tree.

Although Valentin's views were much more radical than those of Uncle Sergei—he would accept nothing short of a democratic republic—Yuri was too preoccupied with the spectacle of the grumpy lawyer's discomfiture to attach any significance to this radicalism. The student was adroit at turning the tables on his uncle, whose denunciations of the ministers he cleverly extended to a denunciation of his uncle's own wishy-washy liberalism. Yuri was about to open his mouth in order to set them by the ears, but Valentin with a worried air nodded a perfunctory greeting to them all, and went up to Polina.

"Mother is out? Look here, sister . . . I promised my friend Yegor—you remember, I spoke about him, he's from the Technological College—splendid chap—well, I promised to put him up for a day or two, until this wave of arrests is over. Nobody will think of looking for him here. I believe Mother won't mind—what do you say?"

Polina looked up at him with eyes of fear and adoration. Valentin startled the family from time to time with his unpredictable behaviour. Once he came home with a bundle of illegal brochures, which had to be hidden away, and the whole family had helped in the search for suitable hiding places; Misha revealed the mastermind of a Pinkerton, and Mme. Izvekova shuddered each time she passed the larder, walking about on tiptoe all the week as if she expected the brochures to explode. On another occasion, when coming home on leave, Yuri had found a girl-student in the flat (and a very pretty one at that) who was introduced even to him as a niece of Mme. Izvekova's from Voronezh, until she let the cat out of the bag herself over their evening tea by mentioning that the police had made a search at her friend's flat. Yuri had nothing against Valentin's revolutionary enthusiasms. They were quite natural, and he regarded them as the usual traditions, according to which Pages and Jurists had to be foppish, *Pavlots* and Nikolayevsky cavalrymen—inbeciles, midshipmen of the Naval College—cool and witty, and students—hairy revolutionaries. Such was the style of every educational establishment, and a student who engaged in revolution seemed much more natural to Yuri than your rich undergraduate who rode about in smart cabs like a Jurist, spouted French like a Lycée-ist, and called the Tsar, not Tsar, but His Majesty, like a Page. This was no less absurd than the idea of Yuri suddenly taking it into his head to study the brochures which Valentin had hidden away. After all, Valentin was simply putting on airs in order to justify the fact that in four years he had barely managed to scrape through to the third course at the Philological Faculty. He was a good fellow, though, who loved

to run after the ladies, was a good mixer, and a great friend of Lieutenant Livitin, with whom (together with Pakhomov) he had graduated from the Gymnasium.

"If it's a question of helping a man, I don't think Mother will mind," Polina said, and added significantly: "Did anyone see you coming in together? Where is he?"

"Downstairs. I believe we've covered up our tracks," Valentin said just as significantly, tossing back a lock of hair that fell over his forehead.

That lock of black hair and the democratic Russian blouse under his student's jacket suited him admirably.

Like all the Izvekops, he had a very tender skin, and when he became excited during an argument spots of colour would flood his cheeks, and this, added to the black lock of hair, his extreme views and the undoubted courage of his actions, as in the case of the hidden literature, was a cause of endless love affairs with the women medical students. Now, too, he was flushed with the exciting sense of his own heroism.

"He's a remarkable man, clever, strong-willed, a splendid organiser. You see, he has nowhere to sleep, his flat is being watched, and will no doubt be searched tonight. I'll run and call him, then. . . ."

"Wait a minute, Valentin," Sergei Izvekov said, raising from the sofa with an aggrieved air. "I understand that I have no influence on you, you run your own life, still, I'd advise you to drop this business, listen to reason."

"Oh, but I've given my word, Uncle!" Valentin protested. "He has nowhere to hide until this wave of repressions dies down. We run no risk at all. You know perfectly well that I'm not being shadowed."

"What about him?"

"I brought him down in a closed cab," Valentin said proudly.

"A closed top in sunny weather! Why, police snoopers would pounce on it like a perch on a spoon bait. Where did you bring him from?"

"Vyborgskaya."

"Across the bridge? Past all those police eyes? What children!"

"He's waiting downstairs, Uncle, it's dangerous," Valentin said firmly. "At any rate I'll bring him in, we can decide where he'll spend the night afterwards. . . ."

"Just as you please, Valentin, but in that case I'll have to stop coming here," Uncle Sergei answered just as firmly. "You can risk your future if you like out of sheer boyish devilment, but I'm not going to risk my present. No sir!"

Valentin threw him an angry look and hard words would have sounded in the hushed room had not Polina gone up to her brother and laid a light hand on his shoulder.

"Darling, Uncle is right. Just think what a blow it would be to Mother if you two—God forbid—were being shadowed. Think it over, Valya."

Uncle Sergei stood looking at Valentin in silence, drawn up to his full height, motionless, large and cold as the caryatid over the entrance to the Russo-Asiatic Bank, the depository of those interest-bearing securities on which the well-being of the Izvekov family in general and Polina's dowry in particular depended.

Valentin spread his hands in despair.

"But it's a shame, Uncle. I promised him! He's waiting there, worrying. How can I explain to him this . . . treachery—I can think of no other word!"

Yuri Livitin was relieved to see the student surrendering. It was really the limit, bringing a suspicious character like that into the house. Valentin was certainly overdoing it, asking for trouble. Yuri was fully alive to the ridiculousness of his own position in the event of a nocturnal police visit, and he sided completely with Sergei Izvekov. Go in for politics, by all means, but don't get other people mixed up in it!

Izvekov, too, thawed at the sight of the student's capitulation. He put his arm round him in a friendly gesture and drew him into the hall.

"Explain the thing to him quite simply and naturally. Tell him that on coming in you unexpectedly found the midshipman here, who was home on leave. Your friend will decline your services himself. . . ."

"Uncle Sergei!" Yuri protested.

But Izvekov was not listening, he had come out into the hall with Valentin.

Misha burst out laughing.

"Uncle got the wind up all right!"

Izvekov's voice trickled in from the hall, bland and cajoling. Valentin seemed to have accepted his reasons, but he went out onto the staircase feeling mean.

Tisheninov was standing on the second landing, gazing through the tinted glass of the window with an air of boredom. Children in the yard were playing at war. A boy in a velvet suit was carrying a tricoloured flag and issuing commands to the yard-keeper's children with furious blasts on his trumpet. The children stared at the shiny

trumpet with poignant and hopeless envy as they pattered barefoot on the asphalt. The violet rhomb of the window tintured the sunny yard a sombre tone, and the children and the flag seemed unreal, suspended in a cold void.

Tisheninov yawned with a slight shiver. He was terribly sleepy—he had spent the previous night aboard a barge with the wood-floaters, and the night before that had slept at the railway station, and had been on his legs for days on end. Events called for action. The strike was spreading, growing into street fights, and factory after factory was stopping work. Into this mass of hungry embittered people Yegor Tisheninov and dozens of others like him were flung like a scanty handful of leaflets issued by the St. Petersburg Committee of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party. Money for leaflets was scarce, and so were the men capable of countering the rose-water words about economic demands with the clear idea of a workers' revolution.

Izvekoy had not come back. Tisheninov swore under his breath. It had been a mistake, of course. The whole thing was a mistake. In the first place, he should not have come here, to the centre of the town, tempted by the prospect of a safe night in a bourgeois flat. Secondly, he should not have attempted to use that "patriotic" occasion to lead the procession across the bridge. The violet glass cooled his brain, quenched the excitement; through it this attempt assumed the look of a downright adventure. It could only have ended the way it did. He should have checked that mischievous thought of trying to fool the police by means of the Frenchmen. It was that accursed romanticism of the secret students' meetings! Short-sighted heroism. Fool!

He yawned again, and his head drooped. The violet rhomb shifted and bright daylight struck his eyes. The flag in the hand of the velvet-clad boy assumed its real colour—white, blue and red. Waves of fatigue surged over him; he felt heavy with sleep and swayed on his legs. For a fraction of a second he fell asleep.

The tricoloured flag became a bedsheet, on which lay the dead woman in the blue cotton dress and the girl in red with the piece of lollipop in her dead hand. That is how he had seen them being carried away after the cossacks returned to the bridge.

He started awake at the sound of footsteps coming down the stairs and looked up expectantly.

Valentin's crestfallen air told its own tale. He recollected with amusement how earnestly Valentin had assured him that the question

of his lodging would be easy and simple. What but empty promises could one expect from that foppish young scion of the master class, who was flirting with the revolution? Not waiting for Valentin to speak, Tisheninov turned and walked downstairs.

"Wait a minute, colleague, let me explain," Valentin cried with a flaming face.

"Oh, never mind. It's as clear as mud. Good-bye, Izvekov, I knew it all beforehand," Tisheninov said with a twisted smile, and he walked down without looking back, a tall gangling figure in a shabby jacket and baggy trousers.

Upstairs a storm raged. Yuri was shooting a thousand words a minute, protesting vehemently against Uncle Sergei's nasty thrust, and arguing indignantly that a naval uniform did not necessarily cover the soul of a gendarme, that people could hold different political views and respect those views in one another, that Russian officers, as a class, had never performed police duties, that to make a bogey of a man's shoulder straps was defamation, and that, when all was said and done, there were such conceptions as honour and nobility—conceptions, apparently unknown to the legal profession. This was too much, and Polina was about to pour oil on the troubled sea of the midshipman's wrath, when Uncle Sergei raised a genial hand.

"General indignation! Unanimous censure of uncle's cowardice!" he said, looking at Yuri as if he were a chicken. "Youngsters, youngsters! Very well, go ahead, take fugitive revolutionaries into your flat, and then wonder why you go to Siberia and the revolution is put back. If you'll allow me, I'll explain."

And he explained his position in well-rounded sentences punctuated with well-placed exclamation marks. In his opinion, Valentin, through his own foolishness, was causing harm to the revolutionary movement he was so enthusiastic about. Valentin had a "clean" flat, and it would be a crime to lose the opportunity of concealing literature or hiding people who *could* be hidden. Uncle Sergei stressed the word "could" and proceeded to his ode. The theme of the ode was Discretion, the better part of valour.

The speech convinced no one. The silence at the end of it became oppressive. The hall-door, which Valentin had left open, was heard to bang and a clink of spurs came to the ears of those in the room. Sergei Izvekov looked round with a start.

To the clink of spurs was added the brassy clank of a sword striking the leg of the table. The muffled voices of men sounded in the hall.

Uncle Sergei looked round the room with the air of an elderly rat caught in 'a stupid trap, and made a gesture of despair, as much as to say, "There, I told you. . . ." Polina stood up, her face paling, and Misha swore in an undertone: "That fool, Valentin, now he's done it—brought the police down!"

Yuri reached for his pipe. The thought of a police search gave him a sick feeling.

In the doorway a young cavalry lieutenant stood, and behind him an embarrassed Valentin. At the sight of him a babble of relieved exclamations arose in the room. Polina flushed with pleasure. Uncle Sergei noisily ejected the air from his lungs, where it was beginning to go bad.

Pakhomov lingered in the doorway for a moment to let them admire his trim figure in its smart tunic and military harness, then glided into the room, diffusing a fresh smell of eau-de-cologne and leather.

"Dog-tired, hungry as a wolf, happy as a god, madly in love," he threw out in a drawling voice as he shook hands all round, detaining Polina's in his own. "Hullo, Yuri, how's Nikolai? Heard the news, ladies and gentlemen? This is the time to join the cavalry, Valentin, eh? My word, these were some days! Saw the Tsar. Talk about enthusiasn! May I smoke?"

He passed round the company with his dancing gait and settled himself in an armchair, smiling, beaming, wriggling his shoulders, giving no one a chance to answer, while he recited off his news, punctuated with questions and exclamations, never still for a moment. In lighting a cigarette he managed simultaneously to pull the ash-tray towards him, tossing the albums about on the table, and all the time swinging a tight-breeched leg, so that the spur clinked. The words flew out of him, shying at each other like a stampeding herd and seeming to pick up their meaning as they careened along. They scattered in all directions, as if whirling in the mazes of a dance, and this, together with the jingling spur, gave an impression of music being played in the room. Pakhomov himself, turning and rocking all the time in his chair, seemed to be dancing an endless mazurka or trying to manage a spirited horse. This was cavalry dash, meant to convey that the lieutenant considered himself a real crackajack.

"Seriously, Valya, you just think of it! You never heard such staggering news! For one thing, it's good-bye to St. Petersburg, to military school. I'm no longer a training officer. Had enough of Easy Street, dammit. Time to join the regiment. This morning—would you believe it!—the Tsar in person congratulated my cadets on their

promotion to second-lieutenants. It just bowled me over! The young cubs are crazy with joy—dashing about the town now, chivvying the tailors. Just think—only three days to get their outfit! Jumping jiminy!”

Yuri pricked up his ears.

“Promotion? Why? What d’you mean?”

“What I say. Majesty’s command. Stunning!”

“Was it only your cadets who were promoted?”

“No, the whole blessed caboodle. Pavlons, Pages, cavalry, artillery. Just imagine it—turn out in the morning on parade, nobody knows anything, then suddenly—“Shun!” National anthem, top brass, the Tsar. Reads out his order, congratulates them on their promotion, drinks their health. They sobbed. I blubbered, too, like a sissy. We weren’t promoted like that. Just think of it—the golden issue, three months ahead of time! Stunning!”

A stab of keen envy went through Yuri, Promotion! And what a promotion! By the Tsar himself! Some fellows had all the luck. He got up and went over to Pakhomov.

“It looks like war then?”

Pakhomov shrugged with a quick jingle of spurs.

“Nobody talks of it openly. But figure it out yourself—why this sudden promotion, when the men even haven’t got their uniform? Between you and me, it’ll all come out in a day or two. I believe war has been decided on in real earnest. Poincaré’s visit. . . . Polina, what’s the matter? Water! Quick!”

The lieutenant rushed to Polina’s side just in time to receive her in his arms. Her pale face, with eyes half-closed, nestled against his tunic. Valentin ran up to them. Sergei Izvekov grabbed the water-bottle. Yuri made a wry face—another “performance”. But it looked as if Polina had really fainted. She lay still in the lieutenant’s arms without any sign of consciousness. Sergei Izvekov hastened up with a glass, spilling the water, but Pakhomov had picked Polina up in his arms.

“That’s all right. What a silly ass I was to blurt it out like that. Give me a hand, Valentin, will you.”

They carried Polina carefully to her room. Sergei Izvekov shook his head portentously as they went out, and wiped his fingers on his handkerchief.

“Think of all the tragedies like this we’ll be seeing in the next few days!” he said sadly, picking up the telephone receiver. “Think of all the tears! The partings! 24-08, please! Terrible, terrible, the flower of our youth! Good-evening, Averyan Ilyich. Will you please

go to the Head Office first thing tomorrow morning and tell Lomov that I advise him not to sign a single contract until I arrive.... Not a single one, Averyan Ilyich.... Exactly, that's what I mean.... We'll have to do some recalculation. And another thing, my dear boy—I shan't get away from the Admiralty till one o'clock, so drop in at the bank on your way down and tell them to sell all my stocks. Yes, all of them.... Oh, just a hunch—a little bird told me. Ah, you old jackal, unload yours too, then, once you've nosed it out. Kiss your wife's hand for me—I've been so busy these days...."

Yuri smoked incessantly. Pakhomov's news had struck him unpleasantly. True, it tallied with what Bobrinsky had said about war being round the corner—but so suddenly? And there was the French squadron—maybe it had come to give us a helping hand—after all, this Sarajevo business had been dragging on for nearly a month... war was unavoidable, that much was clear.

Suddenly it smote at his heart, a heavy, thumping blow, as if a big drum had been struck next to his ear.

War!

The word burst upon his mind with the full force of its grim, thrilling meaning. The festive thunder of the 1812 centenary, the plumed shakos, Chaikovsky's Overture, cannon and smoke, *War and Peace*, valour and glory, his father's uniform with the St. George's ribbon, tin soldiers on the green field of the writing-table, models of ships, the galaxy of Nakhimov admirals, the shame of Tsushima, the flags in the Naval Museum, the black tablets of the heroes in the College chapel—all these things heard, seen and read about swept over him in a multi-coloured torrent, stirring delight, awe and excitement.

War!

The grey-blue turrets of the *Generalissima*, the guns, endowed with human intelligence, the salvoes, splashes, black smoke fleeing before the hard clap of magazine explosions, the ever-shifting fortunes of war, the grim majesty of a naval encounter, the flag of St. Andrew taking the final plunge into the placid depths (who cares!), derring-do and glory, everything staked upon a single naval card—would it come soon, soon?

War so soon, so stupidly soon, when promotion, curse it, was a thousand and one days off! To wait, to sit swotting at his school desk, when others were dying and gaining victories in this never-to-be-repeated tournament of nations? Unthinkable! He felt like screaming, weeping, praying, running somewhere to get people stirring.

He surveyed the room with brightened eyes. But its only occupant was Sergei Izvekov, who had long since hung up the receiver and

was now studying the back page of the evening paper (the confounded stock-jobber!). Misha had disappeared, and Pakhomov was busy bringing Polina round.

Yuri suddenly felt drawn to the Naval College. There he would find men quick to understand him, young men like himself, excited, eager, resentful of the hurried march of history. Perhaps he would be the first to fling into the stagnant pool of their humdrum College routine the triumphant and glorious tidings—war!

But there was nobody at the College. Those who had been in the guard of honour with him were on leave, and the others were at sea. Yuri agitatedly paced the room, then went to Polina's room in search of Pakhomov. The lieutenant was a brother-in-arms, one of his own class, who would understand the tumult of emotion Yuri was experiencing. Yuri jerked the door open (he was too excited to think of knocking) and backed out hastily.

Polina, apparently recovered from her fainting fit, lay on her bed, propped up on her elbow, in the passionate embrace of her fiancé. She was having her fling all right! To the many grudges Yuri nursed against this house was added a new-born grievance—the indignity wrought to himself, to Pakhomov (the *lieutenant*), and to that sublime, cleansing, fire-breathing word—"War".

CHAPTER 9

St. Petersburg sank slowly into the velvet bed of a July twilight. The lower floors of its palaces and the steps of its church-porches were swallowed in the gathering gloom, but their columns, the monuments on the squares, and the Admiralty spire still loomed dimly. The sunken streets were in semidarkness, especially where Tisheninov was walking. There was no wood pavement here; the streets here were pockmarked with cobblestones, hard and big as the skulls of policemen; a passing cart rattled over them with the noise of a machine-gun.

Wood-blocks would have been enemies: they caught the brilliant light from the windows of pastry-shops and cinema entrances. The shops had tempting displays (Tisheninov had not had a crumb in his mouth since morning) and the cinemas lured one with a vision of soft sleep to the lulling sound of music and a stridulating screen (he had not slept for two nights). But the presence of light and people meant undesirable encounters. The cobblestone streets were safer; they led him by friendly winding paths across the whole city, from the Izvekova's flat to the Narva suburb.

War!

This word, escaped from his own speech, followed on his heels all the way from the Lessner factory. Of course, this was war—with killed, wounded, and prisoners, with dashing cossack charges and trophies in the shape of a dead woman and a girl with a lollipop, a real war of machine-guns and sabres against singing mouths and strips of red cloth—a war involving regular troops, disposition; and artillery—for were not field guns used against the little wooden houses of Presnya? And tomorrow, perhaps, siege guns would be slogging away at Vyborgskaya.

War!

There were two distinct wars. One had been started a long time ago, without any exchange of notes or official ultimatums, but it was being waged in real earnest. Casualties reached the proportions of real military figures. In the course of three years—nineteen five, six and seven—our casualties were 26,183 killed and 311,117 wounded not counting those burnt alive on the cruiser *Ochakov*, killed by bullets and shells, drowned in barges at Revel, and flogged to death by punitive detachments. Further losses on our side, apart from these, came under two separate headings: 2,249 men sentenced and hanged by drumhead court-martial, and 37,398 people killed during pogroms. On top of these we sustained losses in men taken prisoner and reported missing in jails, chain-gangs and penal servitude. The average annual figure of these losses was 14,320.

This was war, of course, only there was another name for it—Revolutionary Movement. It was a real war of swift troop movements, of the sudden transfer of the Semyonovsky Regiment to Moscow, a war of attrition on the part of the Okhranka, with flares and the roar of guns, with coded telegrams to Tsarskoye Selo, with prayers and awards, with burning houses and sunken ships. The casualty list ran into an impressive war-time figure suited to any European state: 65,830 killed, not counting the wounded. During the three years of the Crimean War the allied countries—Britain, France and Turkey—lost 88,000 men each. No great difference.

And there was another war. This war had not broken out yet, but it hung over Russia like a heavy thundercloud, swollen with unshed blood, seeking a spot that could attract lightning. Put a lightning rod on the golden dome of the Peterhof Palace! The lightning was drawn there, to the quiet conversation between Tsar Nicholas and President Poincaré. That is where the fire will break out!

The exact figure of human losses was obscured in the darkling clouds that scudded before the wind of Sarajevo, but one thing was

clear—it would have many noughts in it. It was also clear that it would be made up of the same kind of people who had died by the thousand in the long unofficial war which the Russian autocracy waged against its own subjects.

But war also stood for something else.

The smoke-bleared spectre of the Russo-Japanese war stood over Tisheninov in a tanned sheepskin coat, its bearded head and shaggy Manchurian papakha looming in the sky. Presnya, Odessa, Sevastopol, the peasant revolts, the *Ochakov*, *Potyomkin*, the national strike—were these not children of war begotten by Tsushima and Mukden? The coming war, obviously, would be on a larger scale. And its offspring, too, would be sturdier and bigger. More blood would be shed. But even in peace-time blood streamed down the full-dress coat of the Empire. It were better, perhaps, to have a single decisive battle than to drain your strength by losing tens of thousands every year. That much was clear. No less clear was it that fever and fatigue were beginning to tell; it was a tame unfrightening war that followed Tisheninov down the cobblestone streets. More frightening than that looming spectre were the policemen on the street corners and the house porters in their ridiculous sheepskin coats (this in summer!) who crept out of the dark archways to take up night-duty. Their coats reeked of dogs, and it seemed as if one of their wearers, with a short vicious yelp, would sink his teeth into his leg, ripping the green student's trousers.

“Hey, mister student, get a move on. You can't sit there!”

Tisheninov, to his surprise, found himself sitting on a doorstep. The fatigue of the last three days had begun to tell on him. The motionless hulk of fur, beard and tanned leather hanging over him was not the Russo-Japanese war, but a house porter. The man's face was somewhere on a level with the fifth floor, so obviously he couldn't bite his leg. He was beginning to dream again; his head was burning, and there was a hot dry taste in his mouth. Tisheninov shook himself and stood up. Immediately he was jarred into consciousness by two things that stood out from the furred stench of the huge collar and the great beard—a cucumber and a brass plate—the porter's badge of office. He had a desire to snatch the cucumber and eat it; it crunched so tantalisingly on the man's teeth. But the glint of the plate hanging from the neck under the beard cleared his brain with the cold touch of prison bars or shackles. He dare not fall asleep or be ill.

“If you've got a load on, you'd better go home or go to the police station,” the porter said gruffly. “The doorstep's no place to sleep

on. Sprawling there like a lord. . . . Want me to use my whistle? The policeman's round the corner. . . ."

"No need to whistle, old chap," Tisheninov said thickly. "You drink, I drink, we all drink. . . . I'll run along like a good boy. S'long, old bean, kiss the kiddies for me. . . ."

He moved away on unsteady feet, taking care not to quicken his pace or overdo the reeling gait. A drunken man, within limits, was no enemy to a house porter.

Still, he had to get to Kudrin as quickly as possible and keep his mind on it. On turning the corner he walked faster. Broad-faced prostitutes with unnaturally sunken eyes and a sickeningly sweetish smell of face powder about them accosted him with their wearisome "dearie". He blundered through the streets on his last legs, and half an hour later found him, limp and exhausted, sitting before a pot of boiled potatoes in the room of Fyodor Kudrin, an electrician employed at the Putilov Works.

Suddenly his hunger passed. He could not get the potato down his parched throat. A fit of shivering, the first gusts of a violent fever, shook his bony body. Kudrin was sitting on the windowsill, and behind him, through the open window, hung a darkling sky of tumbled clouds. Below, in front of the stone gates of the Narva Triumphal Arch the pale lights of the gas lamps went on. St. Petersburg lay panting, wearied by the day's fighting and festivities. The shrill whistle of locomotives floated on the air.

"Go on, help yourself, Yegor. The missus will cook some more," Kudrin said, drawing at his cigarette and looking at the drooping figure of the student at the table. "Would you like a glass of vodka maybe? Fedosia, where's the bottle?"

Tisheninov shook his head. The woman in the corner, bending over an oil stove, looked up and smiled. To Tisheninov it seemed as if a breath of fresh air had suddenly burst into the low-ceilinged stuffy room. Fedosia Kudrina's smile reminded him of a bleak but beautiful childhood. The woman at the oil stove with smooth parted hair, the rounded shoulders under the thin cotton fabric of her blouse, the remains of a once vivid bloom on the smooth skin of her cheeks, and her calm unhurried movements, stirred him deeply. She (or was it perhaps the stove at which she was busy?) reminded him of his mother, whom he remembered only from the cheap portraits at home. It seemed as if his burning head would find immediate relief if she passed her large—and probably cool—hand over his forehead.

"Leave him alone, Fyodor. Can't you see—the man can scarcely stand on his feet, it's sleep he needs, not vodka," she said in a slow

voice. "I can't think where to put you up, though—you can see yourself how we live."

"You'll lie with Gavryusha, and Yegor and I will share the bed," Kudrin said, but Tisheninov interrupted him with a shake of his heavy head.

"Don't bother, please, I'll lie on the floor. I feel feverish, I wouldn't like to infect you. . . ."

Kudrin turned round in the shadowy frame of the window. Large, well-built, wearing a sailor's blazer that set off his broad shoulders, he sat on the windowsill in the pose of a resting oarsman, his back slightly bent, arms folded and sinewy neck lowered. He turned to Tisheninov a square clean-shaven face and regarded him with curiosity and faint amusement. This was how Tisheninov had seen him eighteen months ago, wearing the same calm amused smile, when first attending the student's talk with a study circle of Putilov workmen.

"I know a good naval remedy; only I'm afraid you haven't got the guts for it," Kudrin said regretfully. "The best cure for a chill is a steambath, with a cup of hot tea after it and a glass o' vodka. With this inside you, you get under a blanket. In the morning you'll jump up brisk as a bee. What about it, Yegor? It's bath-day today, and the bath attendants are not on strike yet. . . ."

Kudrin spoke as he would to a child, and Tisheninov found this at once touching and annoying. Touching, because he discerned in it a profound solicitude; annoying, because he was eager to give an account of those days himself (especially the event on Liteiny Bridge) and to find out what had been taking place in the Narva neighbourhood. But Kudrin smiled as if at some sudden memory, and began to speak as if these were ordinary, quiet and peaceful days.

"No talking in the baths, mind! We had a white rat there once. A fellow named Seryozhin, served on the *Generalissimo*. When I was transferred to the reserve he shipped a killick—became chief petty officer in Company 4. One of your quiet sneaky fellows, nasty piece of work. We used to like going to the public baths in Helsingfors—mixed bathing, you know. You sit here, and over there, where Fedosia is standing, a naked woman will be washing herself. It's a fact! Naturally, we took no liberties, they're very strict about these things. Used to go there just out of curiosity, for the fun of it. We were sitting there once, all soaped up, me and my mate coxswain Kashchenko—he's on re-enlistment service now. He was my first pal, intelligent chap. We were on the *Tsesarevich* together in nineteen twelve—you remember the mutiny—had a narrow escape. Why we

didn't get our concuppance, I can't imagine: we were in touch with the Committee, many of the crew knew it, but no one gave us away. Well, there we were, making as if we were bathing, while all the time we kept goggling at the women. Seryozhin started making passes at a Finnish girl. Kept edging in closer to get a better look, the son-of-a-gun. She shrank back, of course, felt shy. He even stopped washing, eyes fairly popping out of his head. . . ."

"Bunch of goats!" Fedosia said, disgusted. "You ought to be ashamed of yourself, telling such stories."

Kudrin winked slyly at Tisheninov.

"Don't be jealous. We were in a crowd. Well then, she stood it as long as she could, and then—whack!—she fetched him one across his fat face with her wet sponge. Naturally, he took it lying down and sheered off quietly—the Finns don't like that sort of business, you know. And then up gets a fellow, one of your intellectuals by the looks of him, and starts off about what these Russians are doing in a free country. Talked nineteen to the dozen! Five words in Russian, five in Finnish. It was the right stuff, mind you. Stood there naked, shooting his lines about the revolution. Held a regular meeting. Everyone stopped washing and listened. Kashchenko and me were the only ones who went on washing, scrubbing each other's backs, as if we weren't there. Our very silence seemed to say: go it, old boy, we're with you in this! Then the Tsar came in for it—you tsarist bashibazouks (Seryozhin had an anchor and eagle tattooed on his chest) were oppressing Finland, and so on and so forth. Seryozhin came up to us, looking like a bloated bug. 'Grab the blighter!' he says. And Kashchenko says: 'How can we, sir—he's naked? And so are we! Besides, they won't let us run him in. Look at 'em waving their wash-tubs.' The dirty swab swore at us, and made for the door. We followed him just to be out of harm's way, otherwise he'd say afterwards that we remained there to listen. We dressed and went out, and there at the door was Seryozhin passing the word to a sleuth. The gendarmes there go about disguised in civvies. Where he got hold of this one the devil knows. For this prompt action he got a third stripe—the C.O.'s order was read out at commendatory mast—and he was held up as an example. Why don't you eat, Yegor? You must be hungry."

Tisheninov smiled wanly and took the glass of tea which Fedosia had put on the table.

"I've taken ill, I'm afraid. I don't want anything to eat, but I could drink a whole samovar."

Kudrin shook his head pityingly.

"I'm surprised at you, Tisheninov. How come you with your poor health, to work underground? When are you finishing your education?"

"I'm not going to finish it," Tisheninov said, blowing at his tea. "They won't let me. I'll be kicked out, probably. Besides, what's the sense—getting an official job to rob the people?"

"That's just it. Your life's not a rich one, but still, it's more or less passable compared to a workingman's life like ours. We can steer only one course—either you starve or you fight. But you have a prospect, after roughing it for five or six years—or whatever the term is—you'll get on. Instead, you're going with us. Who knows what will become of this revolution. Meanwhile, you're wasting your life. Can't understand you."

Tisheninov smiled, recollecting that Kudrin was fond of philosophising. Devotion to the cause? Indeed, what could he say about it?

"You like to go to the bottom of things, Kudrin," he said with an effort. "You look everywhere for a material reason, and quite right too. But leave at least something for the mind. It's his ability to think in abstractions that makes man differ from the animals. Sometimes you can make another person's troubles your own troubles by a simple process of understanding. The thing we're dealing with, Kudrin, is history, and all through it, down the ages, you find injustice, the oppression of the poor by the rich. And so you join the struggle and lead others into it to make life happier for everybody. It's hard to explain. Maybe it's in the family. My father, as I told you, spent six years in exile; he was a Narodnik. And I was born in exile, a natural-born revolutionary, so to say."

"Your father afterwards had a job in the civil service, I believe? Did he earn good money?" Kudrin suddenly asked.

"Yes, a post-office job, eighty rubles a month."

"That's just it!" Kudrin said triumphantly. "That's where your revolutionism comes from. If he had received three hundred you'd be a Menshevik now instead of a Bolshevik. That's just what I was trying to get at."

Tisheninov laughed.

"It's not as simple as all that, Kudrin," he said, rolling a pellet of greyish bread between his fingers. "You make it sound like a progressive tax: under one hundred rubles a month—a Bolshevik, from a hundred up to three hundred—a Menshevik, from three hundred to four hundred—a Liberal, and from six hundred up—an Octobrist. Is that it?"

"Nothing of the sort," Kudrin brushed the question aside. "Listen, I know what I'm talking about. To know our life you've got to go through it yourself. What was it Marx wrote?—'you have nothing to lose but your chains'. But if you have never worn those chains you're bound to find some excuse for the injustice you just mentioned. The material basis is everything, Tisheninov, the whole world rests on it, and that's where all the ends are to be looked for. I trust you, for instance, but there are some intellectuals I wouldn't trust that much, not even if they stood on their heads to prove me wrong. At the critical moment they're sure to get the jitters and back out. They're the stuff Mensheviks are made of. 'You, and we, and all of us together'—just so much lip work, but when it comes to business, it's so much blather, hot air. Now take last Friday, when we had that scuffle at the Putilov—one fellow like that addressed the meeting. An underground man, shadowed by the police. Sounded all right—greeted the Baku men and stood for solidarity in the strike, but when it came to slogans—stop engine! You could see the Menshevik call sign a mile off: 'Put forward economic demands together with the Baku people—first, an eight-hour day, second, housing,' and so on and so forth.... He shot his lines and climbed down. That was when I gave him beans. What's this waffle we've been treated to, comrades? The same old poppycock? Fight. Who? The employers, he tells us. But don't we know who stands behind the employers? The government, the hated tsarist government. How, I says, how can we tie the employers up in a reef knot if the government has the police and the cossacks behind it? We can't do anything, I says. We've got to strike at the roots, comrades, I says, and the roots are at the Winter Palace. We must knock the tree down, tear it up by the roots...."

Kudrin got off the windowsill in his excitement.

"At this point I came out with something smart—I don't remember it now. On the spur of the moment. You know the rush of feeling that comes on you, when the mass of workers look at you as if you were an apostle and hang on your lips. In short, I said something about economic slogans being a declaration of war against the employers, while political slogans were a declaration of war against the government—I remember reading about that in *What Is To Be Done?*. Got 'em worked up to full pressure. They all trooped out of the yard strongly in favour of a democratic republic."

"Don't shout, Fyodor, you'll wake the child ... and the neighbours will hear you," Fedosia said gently.

Kudrin looked round and lowered his raised hand.

"You're right, I forgot myself," he said, smiling. "But they went. It was like an avalanche."

Tisheninov looked up at him with bloodshot eyes.

"Fyodor," he began, deeply agitated, his face with its high cheekbones stark and pale, "now you led the people out into the road. You did, didn't you? You know yourself what happened afterwards. Many of them didn't come back. I led the Lessner people out onto the bridge today too, thought I'd fool the police. The cossacks trampled a woman to death under their horses' feet—a woman and a little girl. . . . I can't get them out of my mind—their death is on me, like the death of those others on you. . . . We should have foreseen how this would end, but we led them . . . and they were killed. . . ."

Kudrin looked at him blankly.

"Well, they were killed. So what?"

"But it was we who killed them—you and I! Killed our own people!"

Kudrin spat on his cigarette and threw the hissing fag end out of the window. Then he looked up with that inscrutable expression that sometimes came into his face at harsh moments and which Tisheninov found so disconcerting. Kudrin toyed with the window bolt for a while, then said quietly:

"What fool told you that the revolution is made without bloodshed? Besides—let's look at it calmly—how many people were killed on the Putilov road? A few dozen. And how many people turned out all over St. Petersburg the next day? Hundreds of thousands."

"I understand," Tisheninov broke in despairingly. "I understand. . . . But do you mean to say those others . . . those you led out on Friday to meet the bayonets . . . that they don't prey on your mind?"

Kudrin shot the bolt home and suddenly let out a long sailor's oath of soul-shaking intricacy embracing all the martyred saints and the whole royal family. It was so unexpectedly rude that Tisheninov flinched, and rising to his feet, went up to Kudrin as if to shut Fedosia off from this furious torrent of naval invective. But Kudrin stopped swearing as suddenly as he had begun. He turned away from Tisheninov and leaned out of the window, apparently in an effort to compose himself. Tisheninov looked at him, waiting for an answer, but Kudrin was silent; he was rolling a fresh cigarette between his fingers.

The silence in the room became oppressive. Tisheninov realised that this outburst was obviously meant to cover up Kudrin's own qualms at what he knew to be necessary and unavoidable, but the burden of which was too much for any man to bear. The student

stepped forward. The agony of soul which he himself was undergoing had found an echo. He wanted to express this as simply and gently as he could, and opened his mouth to do so, when Kudrin swung round and checked him with upraised hand.

"Wait a minute," he said, and leaned out of the window. Tisheninov looked down too. Immediately he felt dizzy. Fighting the renewed attack of fever that shook his whole body, he listened intently to the sounds coming up from below. It was a strange rumble that steadily rose in volume. Obviously large masses of people were approaching the Triumphal Arch, which flung open its gates to the pale-tinted sky. It was the tramp of thousands of feet, but so far no one was visible.

Here, from the window, the Triumphal Arch could be seen in all its massive grandeur. Bronze warriors stood on pedestals between the columns, their armour glinting dully in the pale light of the street lamps. On the parapet of the arch stood a chariot with figures of Glory and Victory drawn by six rearing horses, vividly etched against the fading sky. The arch looked so odd there, in the backwoods of St. Petersburg, among all those low-built wooden houses. Tisheninov smiled. In this arch was the unconscious irony of history. Here, over the bronze inscription: "To the victorious imperial guard of Russia—from a grateful fatherland", that guard had joined battle with the people, who were carrying a petition to the tsar. Wreathed Glory and Victory had looked down upon the bloody shambles which the guards' bullets had created out of the representatives of a grateful fatherland. The Triumphal Arch was put to good use on January 9, 1905, when the revolution made its entry into St. Petersburg through its gates and left them forever wide open into history.

"They're coming," Kudrin whispered.

The roadway shook under the tread of thousands of feet, and the broken panes of glass in the street lamp opposite the window began to rattle.

Tisheninov, afire with excitement, seized Kudrin's arm. This was the revolution, irresistible, wrathful, marching on St. Petersburg by the old familiar route, along the bloodstained cobblestone road of the working-class suburb, through its own Triumphal Arch!

"They're coming!" Tisheninov re-echoed breathlessly.

He could hardly believe his ears. When had they managed to rally? Why in the evening, at night almost? This was no demonstration, it was an uprising! The bronze armour-clad figures stood huge, motionless, and helpless between the columns. The rearing horses on top of the arch seemed to be snorting, shying at the approaching mass.

"They're coming, the bastards!" Kudrin flung out viciously. Tisheninov threw him a quick puzzled look, and leaned out of the window as far as he could.

From out of the dim archway came a glint of breastplates. The huge black heads of horses appeared. The clip-clop of hooves came loud and strong.

These were live horses and the armour was on living men. Brass helmets with the spread eagle crowned the horsemen. The whole thing looked fantastic. Tisheninov glanced at the pedestals between the columns: the bronze warriors stood in their places, yet one got the impression that it was they who, stepping off their granite plinths and dragging the huge horses down from the portal, had decided to ride through the Triumphal Arch.

"The Horse Guards, blast their dirty souls!" Kudrin muttered at his elbow. "First at parade, first at putting down the people..."

Tisheninov felt like screaming. Screaming without words, on a single high note of fury and despair; screaming so that all the doors of those little wooden houses would fly open with a crash and thousands would pour out into the street, for the guards were entering insurgent St. Petersburg! Massive bronze horses, accustomed to crushing soft bodies, stone images on them accustomed to shooting down unarmed crowds.... The guards were passing through the Triumphal Arch, celebrating victory in advance.

It was a sinister night parade. The officers rode at the head of their squadrons, their white uniforms and English marks dividing off the metallic mass. The horses in the squadrons seemed to be keeping step with one another. The tinkling glass of the street lamps sang their disquieting song; this was the only music to the night parade. An endless ribbon of troops issued from the Triumphal Arch.

The Grenadier Guards rode past in their fur-trimmed helmets with scarlet greedy tongues hanging down the back of their heads. Then came the hated Cossacks of the Lifeguards on picked horses, ready for the charge; these were followed by cuirassiers, with long broadswords hanging down the sides of their wellingtons like silver sticks; they used them as truncheons, without drawing them from their scabbards, when dispersing a crowd. Then the lamps started tinkling all together. The heavy tread of the Semyonovsky Regiment shook the house to its foundations; the simultaneous tramp of soldiers' boots ground the blood of January the Ninth deeper into the cobblestones of the roadway.

"That means more trampling tomorrow," Kudrin said, drawing back from the window. "They don't call the guards out from camp for nothing. I can understand them; there aren't enough police, and something serious is in the wind. Did you hear, *Pravda* has been closed down? Raided this morning, a regular smash-up, thirty people arrested, editors and staff. They've got it all neatly worked out—first, the paper's closed down, then they get the guards out, and tomorrow, I shouldn't be surprised, there'll be a state of siege. This is a regular revolution, like nineteen five, and no mistake! Let's turn in, we'll need all our strength tomorrow."

Tisheninov came away from the window, swaying. Seeing a shake-down on the floor in the shape of a folded blanket and a pillow, he dropped down on it only half-conscious of what he was doing. His mind was in a turmoil. The visions of that day thronged confusedly above him, surging back and forth in incessant waves, and merging into a tossing delirium, heavy and oppressive as the slow menacing tread of the guardsmen (ninety paces a minute); who continued to pour through the wide jaws of the Triumphal Arch in an endless stream.

The guards had come straight from review at Krasnoselsky Camp without even changing their full-dress uniforms. In the morning they had marched past the brilliant bouquet of uniforms and court dresses forming a little mound behind the croup of the Tsar's white horse, sleek and corn-stuffed to the point of phlegm, and behind the black varnished splash-boards of the presidential carriage. Just as now, the immense field had shuddered beneath the measured (ninety paces a minute) tramp of feet; the breastplates and helmets of the mounted guardsmen had gleamed in the sun; sixty-three thousand crack troops of the imperial guards had passed before the Tsar and the President.

The air was vibrant with the blaze of sound from the brass and silver trumpets of the mixed bands, whose mighty wave hit the startled birds like a spring hurricane. The Lorraine March—the march of the French province annexed by Germany—sounded over the field like a reminder, a promise, a challenge. Its belligerent message was interpreted by all the way it was meant to be. A smile lurked in the stiff short moustache of the French ambassador, and the German ambassador stood arrogantly calm and malevolent. The Tsar glanced at the President with a pale smile: the spectacle was so impressive, so full of power and grandeur.

M. Poincaré, you should be pleased: here are the guards of the Russian Tsar—that dread Asiatic horde, disciplined and captained by scions of the country's best families, the ample fist of the Russian

Tsar, which had often threatened France—now passing before you, a native of Lorraine, in an ecstasy of devotion, under the eyes of the German and Austrian ambassadors, and to the strains of the Lorrainese March, the very march which the German authorities have banned on the territory of Alsace and Lorraine. You should be pleased: the Emperor had been listening to you the day before with grave and acquiescent attention. You are a good speaker, Raymond, you spoke only about Russia without mentioning a word about France; you reminded the Autocrat of what his Foreign Minister and Russia's best minds have been saying over and over again. You said that the failure of the Russo-Japanese war had put an end to Russia's aspirations in the Far East, and mentioned another area—the Near East. You quoted figures: 80 per cent of Russia's grain exports through the Dardanelles, annual losses amounting to a million rubles when Turkey, during the troubled year of the Balkan wars, closed the strait. You mentioned that Germany was gaining ground in the Near East and the day was not far off when the Dardanelles would slip from the flaccid grasp of the barbarian Turks and fall into her mailed cultured hands. You repeated the words of Sazonov, Russia's Foreign Minister: "Your Majesty, the Dardanelles are in the hands of a powerful state, and that implies Russia's complete economic enslavement by that state."

Profound economist and brilliant politician, you combined into one these two mainsprings guiding the destinies of nations and touched the Tsar's weak spot with your play of figures. "The revolution is powerless without the support of liberal circles of industrialists and financiers," you said, and revealed the cause of their discontent by quoting further damning figures: 6 million rubles' worth of Russia's industrial exports to Germany as against 300 million German imports. Russia's 400 million total exports as against 650 million German exports to Russia alone, not counting the desperate struggle in Turkey and Persia. Broad circles of the Russian community were rightly displeased with this flood of German goods. Russia's young industry and her ancient farming were not strong enough to stand up to this avalanche. The Tsar who would put an end to this by armed force and provide an opening for Russia's industrial potentialities would share the historic fame of Peter the Great, who had blazed new paths for his country's development. Such a Tsar would have the backing of the country's best people.

You remember how raptly that pasty-faced foolish man in the white naval uniform had listened to you, somewhat bewildered by the figures you had flung at him. You played on every string—on

economics, on the idea of the Slav Empire, on chivalrous sensibilities (the sacred ties of alliance!), on tsarist pride (Tsushima! Port Arthur! Mukden!), on the revolution (who are more to be feared, Your Majesty—the ignorant mob or the university-educated businessmen and industrialists?), you played with masterly skill—and now the guards were marching past you, a grateful gift to you, saviour of the dynasty and friend of the Empire.

This vast army, France's new colonial troops, like the Zouaves, Negroes and Annamites, would soon fulfil its historical mission. These young healthy muzhiks would form a solid wall against the German bullets and shells. There were a lot of these sturdy bodies, and each of them would require at least two German bullets, leaving so much less for the French. These barbarian hordes (was it not they who had blocked the path of the curved Tatar sabre and prevented it from slashing its way through to Europe?) were to act as a compress, drawing the German troops away from Paris. They would take a long time killing, because there were so many of them; they were as multitudinous as the Chinese, the men alone numbering 87 million. They would threaten Germany from the east like a swarm of indestructible locusts, rising in the trenches to take the place of the dead like mushrooms after a rain.

It can't be helped, Raymond! It's the way of the world, is it not, for some to fight with shells, while others fight with men? And who will dare blame you for having sent to their death millions of the men who inhabit this rich but stupid country? It has its own interests at heart and will fight for them, fight for its own place under the sun. But you would not be a statesman, Raymond, if you failed to make this unwashed giant, Russia, work for France!

The guards marched across the Krasnoselsky field in serried columns of living flesh, little suspecting what that portly gentleman in the high hat sitting in his carriage on the hillock was thinking about them. The breastplates of the Horse Guards and the Cuirassiers shone like gold sovereigns on a bank teller's desk; the multicoloured uniforms of the infantry wove themselves into a fanciful pattern mindful of rainbow-hued treasury notes. Indeed, Raymond, was this not like money that had suddenly and marvellously come to life—the ten thousand million gold francs that had poured into Russia in predacious search of profits?

His Majesty's Cuirassiers, Her Majesty's Cuirassiers, His Royal Highness the Tsesarevich's Cossacks. His Majesty's own Bodyguard, the Imperial Household Infantry Regiment, the Grenadier Kexholm Regiment of the Emperor of Austria, the St. Petersburg Grenadier

Regiment of the King of Prussia—an indistinguishable medley of Russian, Austrian and German crowns interwoven with Slavonic and Latin monograms on golden shoulder straps and the scarlet cloth of shabracks.

Princes, barons, counts, dukes, grand dukes, untitled nobility preserving its ancient origins behind a palisade of long-handled names; callow cornets fawned upon by regimental commanders; staff captains wooing princesses of the royal blood.

Estates, majorats, patrimonies, country homes, reserves. Light-limbed horses from private studfarms, and strapping soldiers from the owners' county—both selected for colour, height and condition.

The Guards—the Household Troops, the royal bodyguard, the elite and envy of the army, the finest troops of imperial Russia—were magnificent to the point of incredibility, like carvings in gold, like grand opera crowd scenes employing sixty thousand well-trained extras.

An unnatural throng of disciplined men, they followed behind the groomed tails of the officers' mares, carrying steel-blue bayonets behind their shoulders like the upright teeth of gigantic combs. Their right hands swung out from the flank with the measured stroke of a powerful flat wing. Their heads were thrown back by the force of an invisible blow to the chin. Staring eyes were glued on the mane of the docile white horse. And at one and the same spot—within four paces of its narrow impassive muzzle—the regimental commanders tossed their naked sabres aloft like silver torches, kindling the primed tinder of enthusiasm with their cold flame. At this sign the soldiers looked down at the feet of those in front of them and opened their mouths wide with a dazzling display of teeth.

Only a stampeding herd of maddened buffaloes could emit a roar more appalling and nerve-shattering. The soldiers' heads distended from the shouting. Shakos tightened on foreheads. Veins swelled at the men's temples. The bands were drowned in the roar. The standard-bearer marched in silence, following the rhythm of the step and watching the soundless flourishes of the bandmaster's baton; the whole regiment kept in step with his firm tread.

The Tsar saluted, and the second platoon columns, hitherto silent, amplified the cheer to a tremendous pitch. So the Guards had been trained, so did they amaze foreigners by their concerted shout.

This game, repeated dozens of times since the parade began, was becoming tedious however. Behind the backs of the Tsar and the President the retinue began to talk and whisper, glancing at the isolated isles of the Austrian and German ambassadors with mean-

ingful smiles. Those two diplomats were well aware of the nature of these animated whisperings: the cascade of sparkling wit was all the more caustic there the more delicate the hints conveyed by this offensive parade. Every clash of cymbals in the band (which played the endless Lorrainese March) was like a resounding slap across the pale face of Count Pourtalès. Diplomatic dignity has its detailed catalogue of calculated insults; at a full-dress luncheon it is the brand of wine which the Page of the Chamber pours into the ambassador's glass; at the court ball—the polite refusal of the Foreign Minister's wife to dance the first polonaise; at the Audience—the barely perceptible difference in the inclination of the royal head. These trifles, seemingly unimportant, imply a sharp change in foreign policy long before ultimatums are delivered. The choice of the Lorrainese March for the march-past of the Russian Guards at such a tense moment in European affairs could not be just mere Asiatic tactlessness. It showed that with the arrival of Poincaré the Tsar had thrown prudence to the winds and was burning his bridges. The war, evidently, was settled as far as he was concerned.

The cuirasses, helmets, shakos, sabres, lances, banners—all that medieval warlike pomp and splendour could not, however, dazzle the German ambassador. The lines of passing troops formed themselves into the familiar ruled lines of intelligence reports concerning the efficiency of the Russian army. The companies arranged themselves in close columns of figures of commissary expenditure. The guns were a comforting reminder of the work the factories had to do to put out shells for them; the blue combs of bayonets told their story of an inevitable shortage of rifles for the reserves; the tall stature of the guardsmen meant so many extra shovelfulls of earth to be thrown out of the trenches to conceal these giants from the accurate aim of the German artillery. Shovels switched one's mind to Russia's factories, as had the bayonets, the guns, and all those countless troops demanding railway cars for their transportation to the frontier, rails for those cars to run on, engines to haul them, and coal to feed the engines. Russia with her million-strong armies was no longer the bugbear she had been a century before, when men had not yet learned to pierce the thickest concentration of attacking masses with the raking and ceaseless fire of machine-guns and to mix up any number of regiments with any amount of the earth they were pinned down to by a hurricane of long-range shells. Metal, not flesh, industry, not battles, now decided the outcome of war. Besides, between this resplendent army and the German frontier lay unfinished miles of strategic railways, the viscid bog of thirty-day Russian mobilisation,

and France today could brandish the Russian sabre as much as she liked. Before that sabre could be raised to deal a blow, France herself would be no more: a fierce lightning thrust by way of Belgium and there would be a second Sedan, another surrender of Paris.

From the field was wafted up the reek of sixty-three thousand huge sweating bodies, steaming in their tight uniforms, their fur pelisses and breastplates (which were as hot as samovars). This smell—the smell of the muzhik—was a grim reminder of the multitude of similar muzhiks, not yet invested in soldiers' uniforms, who were waiting their turn all over the vast straggling land to be taught the simple trick of marching behind their officer in straight ranks, and, when they had mastered that art, to be sent off to the trenches. Behind the nephews, husbands, grandsons, cousins, lovers and sons of the court nobility gathered in the pavilion marched the muzhiks, sweating with heat, zeal and fear in their operative costumes sewn on taxes collected from themselves. Well-fed, awe-struck by the abundant guardsman's ration after the habitual state of undernourishment in the village, they marched along, stupefied by the treadmill round of parades, reviews, drill, and guard duties; they unlearned the habit of work and learned to envy the red-faced N.C.O.s and to dream of rising to that splendid rank themselves in order to lay the now forgotten ghost of perpetual need and the drudgery of village life.

Half-literate and uncivilised, familiar before their army service with only two kinds of metal-built machines—the axe and the primitive plough—they carried their rifles like cudgels, dragged their machine-guns like harrows, and shied at their own cannon. Count Pourtalès eyed them with amused curiosity. Dull clumsy louts, taught to shoot from circus pistols—how little they resembled the soldiers of his own country, where culture and industry made people machine-minded from their infancy, trained them in habits of orderliness and sharpened their wits! It would be interesting to see into what a helpless heap these orderly regiments would be thrown if some special magnet capable of attracting only gold shoulder straps were to wrench the rare figures of the officers out of their ranks. And what a mastermind was needed capable of creating the organisation for controlling this impossible herd in modern warfare and leading it to victory.

Count Pourtalès found the head that housed that mind without difficulty. Tiny, low-browed and grizzled, it stuck out above the waving cornfield of plumed and feathered shakos and cocked hats like a grey unbreakable insulator on a telegraph pole, drilling the guardsmen with tiny beady eyes. The stale sluggish blood of a three-

hundred-year-old dynasty, undiluted by a single fresh drop, impoverished by inbreeding (royalty, like dogs, is endogamous) had forced up that tiny cranium to a towering height, like an accidental and useless appendage on a preposterously long body. Thrust up into these lonesome heights, to which the blood (like piped water in provincial upper storeys) was pumped with difficulty in a thin trickle, this head, at every movement, seemed to rattle the blood-starved shrunken brain within it. This rattle, however, was sufficient to qualify the Grand Duke, Commander-in-Chief of the Household Guards and of the St. Petersburg Military District, and uncle of the reigning emperor, for the post of future leader of the Russian Army.

The rattle of that desiccated brain reverberated among the Guards like a compulsory drumbeat dressing the ranks and calling to military glory. Power and authority, unsparing, unbending, undaunted in the face of a rebellious empire—that was what the officers of the Guards saw in his ruthless endorsements on court-martial sentences, in his orders concerning reviews which were like whiplashes across the faces of the generals, and even in the coarse oaths flung in their faces from the eminence of goodly Petrine stature—power and authority, such as Russia could not remember since the days of Nicholas I. And so, at officers' meetings, at private carousals held in each other's apartments, in the smoking-rooms of military schools, by legend passed from mouth to mouth was created the dangerous popularity of Nikolai Nikolayevich among the officers of the Guards. They talked about a palace coup, about replacing one Nikolai by another, about setting up a military government, for which Russia yearned and so badly needed after the tsarist throne had been shaken by the Duma, Rasputin, shady bankers, and the fresh memory of the shameful Japanese war.

Suddenly an odd sound of cheering arose in the field. Ringing, rapturous and sincere, it struck a new note after the apathetic roar of the soldiers. All heads turned, and lorgnettes and binoculars were raised.

Boys were marching past. Their tunics were startlingly simple. Under the right shoulder strap of each was a sheet of white paper folded in four.

No military unit had ever passed before the Tsar in such disorderly ranks and with such loss of military bearing. The bayonets over their narrow shoulders formed a disgraceful wavy line, which seemed to be breathing together with them, nervously and excitedly. The right-flank man in the third line all but stumbled along, blinded by tears of ecstasy, his whole thin, undeveloped body turned to the Tsar.

Tears streamed down many a rosy cheek. The "Hurrah!" had a genuinely heartfelt and grateful ring to it.

The Tsar then took his hat off and made the sign of the cross over the disaligned ranks.

As if at a signal, everyone went mad. Ladies tore the boutonnieres from their shoulders, weeping, and flung the flowers into the wabbling ranks. Officers of the court shouted "Hurrah!" in falsetto voices. The Grand Duchess Militsa Nikolayevna, dark-eyed and beautiful like an ominous sibyl auguring death, turned pale, swayed, and running swiftly across the grass between the Tsar's horse and the ranks, kissed the first youth who happened to be passing. He gasped and stumbled on like a blind man, while she stood before the passing ranks like a white statue of victory, arms stretched forth convulsively, an inspiring figure of haunting fading beauty.

And there she stood, in front of the Tsar and the Empress, blessing the dazed broken ranks, unaware, not caring, what impression her impulsive gesture had created.

The lifeless face of the Empress broke out in blotches; the Tsar's watery-blue bulging eyes became covered with a glassy film; the white-and-pink bouquet of tsarist daughters set in the lacquered basket of the six-seater landau fluttered all its petals in a fit of indignation. The President smiled with the air of a stranger witnessing a domestic scene and pretending not to notice that it was gradually working up to the screaming and plate-smashing stage. And only at the top storey of the Tsar's uncle did a dry bristly smile of approbation float up into the dry bristly little beard.

Militsa Nikolayevna, his wife's sister and the wife of his brother, was a daughter of the King of Montenegro. She was a passionate apostle of war for the liberation of the Slavs, an adherent of the war party, who openly and irreconcilably inspired the palace opposition of the grand dukes against the Empress. It was she who barbed the soldatesque jokes of her ambitious brother-in-law about Rasputin and together with her sister circulated them among the salons, regiments and palaces. It was she who translated the inexpressive rattle of his dried-up brain into an ardent preaching of war at any price, war to save the throne and keep its mainstay—the Guards—safe. It was she, who with flattery, balls, visits to the regiments and promising hints, bought the devotion of the officers of the Guards.

And it was she again now (and not the Empress or any of the Tsar's timid daughters) who took advantage of the moment to buy the devotion of these youths, to turn this loyal impulse of theirs into her

own channel, herself a reminder of her sister's husband and her husband's brother—their true leader. And he, appreciating this, arched his tiny head as he leaned over towards the Minister of the Court. The latter obediently motioned to the Master of Ceremonies. The Lorraine March broke off. The slow strains of the national anthem snatched top hats and cocked hats from balding heads, and again the tiny predacious cranium of the master of the Guards, Grand Duke Nikolai Nikolayevich, floated up into its lonesome height upon the crest of the wave.

The military schools, whose senior companies had been promoted that day to sub-lieutenant rank, had the great honour of marching past to the strains of the anthem. The white sheets of paper containing the promotion order tucked under their shoulder straps were the only sign of their long-awaited transformation from semi-soldiers into officers of the Guards. Shouting rapturously, blessing the Tsar and gratefully giving themselves up to him—for war, for deeds of valour, for death—they still marched in ranks, soldier-fashion, preparing to join the ranks of the Guards and lead them along the splendid path of military glory.

A grim and dreadful path! Running through the centuries from the Battle of the Narva to the Narvskaya Zastava. Reeking blood dripping from clumsy bayonets and supple gauntlet rods. Proud tatters of fighting banners over soldiers' backs flogged to tatters. Palace sentries guarding emperors and, when need arises, dispatching them in a corner of their bedchambers like rats to make room on the throne for empresses. Empresses' rewards for it: titles, decorations, estates for the officers, twenty-five-years' service for the rank and file. Winter parades before the Winter Palace, snow marches across the Alps, the Balkans and the Caucasus; stiff corpses in tight soldiers' uniforms lying about in the snow of wood-block pavements and the snow of mountainsides. Loosened screws in carbines and filed down bayonets to gladden the royal heart with their simultaneous clatter when presenting arms—and to make their bullets miss the Turks and the French. Silent attacks in close order, with bands playing and banners unfurled, under a hail of case shot. The tragic defeat at Austerlitz in 1805, but!—a hundred years later—the brilliant victory at Presnya.*

The boys wept. Unforgettable moment, sublime minute, when each was ready to die at a flutter of the royal eyelashes—where and when would the officers of the Guards recall that day?

* Krasnaya Presnya—a working-class district in Moscow, scene of barricade fighting during the revolution of 1905.—*Tr.*

Already, like leaves before the dry simoom of impending war, shares on the stock exchange were dropping; already the telegraph wires were wailing, heated with ultimatums, and soon the women in the villages would begin to wail, smitten by the mobilisation scheme; already the bullet of a Serbian student had plugged the first hole in the full-blooded body of Europe and the blood was already oozing, so far in drops, soon to spurt in a flood. Already these men had started on their last journey from Krasnoselskoye Camp, to which they would return no more for spectacular parades and good living.

One after another they depart from the Krasnoselskoye field into the dim haze of the years—officers' companies in soldiers' ranks, in soldiers' shirts, with soldiers' rifles, oddly anticipating their own future, when companies, battalions and batteries of officers in soldiers' ranks, with soldiers' rifles, would again pass before some other white horse, corn-fed to the point of phlegm, on their way to other unimagined fronts to recover their majorats, estates and patrimonies; when, with thrice-sworn allegiance, they would run away from the soldiers of their own counties to march side by side with yesterday's enemies—German, Czechoslovak and Bulgarian—against the Russians, in front of whom they would perceive familiar red banners. The Don, the Caucasus, Siberia, Warsaw, the Crimea, Terriokki; Japanese, French and British steamers. Constantinople, the Gallipoli camp, the Algerian mines—rushing about all over the world, from Paris to Shanghai, from Bucharest to Manchuria, the crow's flight following the sweet scent of blood, no matter where it was; frantic despair, desperate hopes, the petty gratuities of the Ryabushinskys and Deterdings; "God Save the Tsar" before the combed tails of English mares and the Russian "Hurrah" before the grizzled moustache of Raymond Poincaré, the only one who would not desert you in the course of decades.

CHAPTER 10

"This Sixteenth Day of July,
Anno Domini 1914,
The Second Year of Our Lieutenancy
The Sveaborg Roadstead

"Gentle brother mine, Yuri Petrovich,

"Sunk in despondency and heavy with forebodings of ill, I have resolved me to pen this whimsical epistle so that in the congenial company of thy wit and goodly humour I may eschew imprecations foul and so save my soul from the ever-

lasting fires of hell. Yet am I sorely tempted to give them utterance. It is truly said: 'A sailors' life is hell afloat.'

"'Tis further said: 'Ave, Yuri, morituri te salutant.'* Anent the aforesaid morituri, methinks these events will come to pass before many a day is out.

"Verily, ultimatums are casting a shadow upon our lives. Forasmuch as the print-sheets called newspapers are delivered to our ship with regrettable laxity, the entire crew, skipper included, drift amid the reefs of the political situation like a frigate caught in a fog: from which side we are assailed and who the foeman his steel will bare, we know naught of. There are those who aver that Swedish frigates have sallied forth to trounce us; some, on the contrary, vow that it is the Germans who are launching their watercraft against us, while others cast a fearful eye upon the English fleet, mindful of the perfidy of Albion. Wherefore, our Johnnies are laying wagers among themselves as to whom we are going to fight. Even I have laid a wager on the Germans against our chirurgion Osip Karlovich, who cherishes suspicion of the Swedes, staking four goblets of Frankish wine called fizz. It augurs well for me in this dispute, seeing that it was the Germans who did the ape invent, hence, they could easily invent a *casus belli*. In which event, we shall quaff. There's a divinity that shapes our ends, and we can but discharge our loyal duties, polishing the brasswork until it doth dazzle the eye and scrubbing the deck with sand down to the very armour. And if it be the will of God, we shall lay the foe by the heels with the aid of sand and swab, inasmuch as we have not yet found time to receive our shell rations from the Admiralty, and are unable to get our frigate in fighting trim until the thunderclap doth come, whereat, and not a moment sooner, it behooves the Russian patriot to cross himself. It is rumoured here that your St. Petersburg senators have locked our admiral in his cabin and put a guard there in case, God forbid, that mischievous old man should take the fleet out to sea, since ships have a way of sinking, whereas in harbour or at their moorings they are safe. Howbeit, we have it said in history books, that a similar hap at Port Arthur ended in tears. . . .**"

* A paraphrase of the salutation of the Roman gladiators to Caesar.—*Tr.*

** On January 26, 1904, Japan, without officially breaking off diplomatic relations, started war by an attack on the squadron standing unprepared in the roadstead of Port Arthur.

The letter, begun that morning, still lay on the table. Lieutenant Livitin read it through, smiled, and—just as he was, in cap and soiled tunic—sat down to finish it. Flag Lieutenant Boshnakov was leaving for Björkö in a destroyer on a staff errand—a naval force was stationed there—and Livitin was in a hurry to hand the letter to him on the *Rurik*.

The letter, begun in that style on a sudden impulse, called for a witty conclusion, but his mood at the moment was anything but facetious. The day was ebbing, and the sense of alarm became clamorous as the rumours grew, assuming gigantic dimensions. Boshnakov, who had come dashing in meteorlike from headquarters with repeat orders to complete all mobilisation preliminaries by night-fall, had just had time to tell them excitedly that the mine-layers had already gone out to Porkkala-Udd loaded up with mines, that somebody somewhere had sighted German cruisers at sea, that mobilisation had been decided on but was being held up by the Tsar in expectation of Austria's reply to Russia's note. The wardroom was talking openly of war; a current sea yarn was being retailed that Vanya Aseyev, spending his third week in detention room for drunkenness, had telegraphed to the Admiralty: "Request temporary release join first dangerous cruise atone offence in blood reply prepaid." The Helsingfors newspaper gave a confused account of the Austro-Russian negotiations, officers recalled from leave and shore employment brought information which contradicted the newspapers, and there was no guessing what would happen. It was a period of anxious suspense, with everyone talking war and the word itself banned utterance, with ships preparing for action and no mobilisation yet ordered, with peace-time officially prevailing and all minds and acts being geared to war; with war undeclared and everyone yearning to have it declared so as to put an end at last to these days of uncertainty and suspense.

As a matter of fact, the lieutenant had begun his letter simply as a means of restoring his customary sanity and mental poise. Perhaps that explained the tone it had assumed at the outset, but now he did not feel like continuing it in that vein. Musingly, he turned the cap of his fountain pen; it released a thick drop on the tip of its gold sting, and obedient to the fingers, moved slowly across the bluc-tinted surface of the thick rough-edged note paper.

"I have a proposition to make to thee, dear brother. I conjure thee by Allah: obtain leave from thy chieftains, if only for a brief spell, and come hither in all haste before we start feeding

God's fishes. I would fain weep on thy neck and give some domestic instructions, sith a certain project of mine has been reported afresh to the Admiral, which betimes may have consequences to my person in the service of King and Country. An official missive to thy chieftains bearing the same petition will be delivered by the same messenger who carries the present epistle. I fondly hope that they, thy chieftains, will suffer thee to depart without let or hindrance, for we are heroes of the day. . . ."

"Dinner time, sir," Kozlov announced, appearing in the doorway. Lieutenant Livitin nodded and held up a warning finger.

"Joking apart, Yuri, get leave at once and come down, if only for a few hours. I'm in the blues. You'd better hurry, or you may miss me, and God knows when we may meet again. . . ."

Kozlov laid out a clean tunic, and stood waiting while the lieutenant finished his letter, and slipped it into a long narrow envelope bearing the word "Generalissimo" in the corner in blue embossed lettering. Both envelope and paper smelt strongly of chypre.

"Go to the *Rurik* and give this letter to Lieutenant Boshnakov with my note," Livitin said as he crossed to the washstand, throwing off his tunic. His immaculate whites were besmeared with oil and soot. Kozlov caught the tunic as it flew bunkwards and opened it out disapprovingly.

"Another of your number ones ruined, sir. I laid out one of your old tunics. At this rate you'll run through all your kit. What's the good of that one now! You can't take the watch in that, sir, not with all those stains on it."

"You can't make an omelet without breaking eggs," Livitin said. "Don't grumble. Kozlov—war. . . . Did you find her in?"

"Yessir. Told me to thank you. Here's your change, sir. Paid forty-five markkas. Roses weren't up to much, though, sir. The subs bought 'em up this morning like hot cakes, the florist said. You'd think it was Easter."

"It's war!" Livitin laughed out of his towel, then suddenly lowered it and stared curiously at Kozlov as he wiped his long fingers. The nail of his left forefinger was broken down to the cutis in an ugly gash, and the rough towel irritated the tender skin.

That, and the ruined tunic, were the beginnings of war. Thoughts and things peaceful were perishing, men and tunics no longer meant anything, the conventional protective coverings of emotion were being torn aside, and something excitingly (and unpleasantly) irri-

tant chafed the soul, baring some corner of it, which had become supersensitive to the impact of new and tremendous events.

Livitin had broken his fingernail while cutting down the main-mast. And the main-mast was being cut down because it was suddenly found to be utterly useless on a fighting ship. This discovery had been made only two days before, in the fierce light of Austria's ultimatum to Serbia.

Her masts were the pride of the *Generalissimo*, the pride of her officers and the whole service down to the last cadet who bought picture postcards of the Russian Imperial Navy. They were huge latticed towers of spiralled steel, corkserewing into the sky to a height of a hundred and twenty feet and girdled with ten bands each as thick as a man's body—two life-size Alexandrian columns planted on the deck. The fleet was proud of them because they were a replica of the latticed masts of American dreadnoughts, because none of the average ships in the Russian Navy could boast such a beautiful piece of work, and also because their intricate contour, reminiscent of the Eiffel Tower, was the last word in naval efficiency: the towers were crowned by massive tops designed as Director Towers centres. Something went wrong with the Director Towers from the very start and it was given up as a bad job. But the masts remained, a comfort to friends and a terror to the enemy—adding grandeur to the *Generalissimo's* forbidding aspect.

But on the 14th of July—

when the shot fired at Sarajevo had its lingering repercussion at last in diplomatic safes, which discharged their first salvo of ultimatums;

when the ironclad *La France*, flying the French President's flag, steamed home at full speed through the German Ocean to bring the great stage director back to Paris in time for the first act of his world spectacle;

when the Autocrat of all the Russias had opened the malachite casket on his writing-table, cluttered with the portraits of his numerous daughters, and taken from it the first variant of the manifesto concerning the declaration of war;

when the Ministers of War and Marine were trying to puzzle out the Tsar's strange and unforeseen command to mobilise the troops only against Austria;

when the mine-layers had taken on a full supply of mines to seal off the Gulf of Finland for years to come;

when the ominous signal "Repel torpedo attack" sounded aboard the ships for the first time at nightfall and the men ran to their

General Quarters and manned them all through the night in the grey gloom, waiting fearfully for an unknown enemy to strike at an unknown time from an unknown direction;

when the practice shells that filled the shell-rooms began to seem a mockery of the nerve-racked men, who were expecting them to be exchanged for live shells (but no order was given because there was no mobilisation yet) and when every sailor and officer was eager to receive those live shells as a comforting, though uncertain, guarantee against the sudden appearance of German or Swedish battleships;

when the signalmen fancied these battleships in every Finnish bark that loomed up to seaward;

when the possibility of war became a reality, and every ship's detail was reassessed in the tremulous light of self-defence and weighed in the scales of war, which had been rusting peacefully in peace-time—

then, on the 14th of July 1914, the latticed masts were suddenly found to be, not the ship's pride, but her deadly peril.

The two Alexandrian columns walking the Baltic wave were within farthest visual range. They would loom in the sights of the *Moltke* and the *Deutschland*, an excellent target. They would treacherously betray the *Generalissimo's* course angle and help the German range-takers to find the range. Attracting shells like a gigantic magnet, the first direct hit would bring their massive tops and tons of steel crashing to the deck, jamming turrets, smashing through superstructures and killing their own men. Useless ornaments serving no purpose owing to the inoperative Director Towers, they stood over the ship like tombstones prepared in advance. Thus perfection, retaliating for neglect, became an evil.

In the morning of July 14, the naval Commander-in-Chief, asserting at last full authority, gave the order to have the masts cut away.

Amid the turmoil and confusion of premobilisation and wild wardroom speculation Lieutenant Livitin found a real job of work; the proposal to dismast the ship without the use of scaffolding or cranes was his. There was a cruel and soothing pleasure in this act of destruction; it seemed the only worthwhile thing to be doing at the moment.

He was cutting the steel with acetylcne. For two days and nights running the blue tongues of flame had been whistling at heights of a hundred and twenty, a hundred and five, and eighty feet. Two gallons of vodka had been issued to the crew of his turret at the lieu-

tenant's expense by way of encouragement. The shrinking mast seemed to sink into the deck like a nail driven in by a hammer. War was introducing its first amendment into the grim grandeur of the *Generalissimo*. Puny logs were being painted a drab grey in the dockyard to replace the raking masts. Pieces of the huge spiral broke off, hissing, and swayed on the girtline as they were slowly lowered into the lighter. Below, bunkering was in progress, barrels of salt meat were rolled in, stores of war were taken in and those of peace discharged, with men rushing hither and thither; aloft, on the mast, the blinding gas whistled, and the Fire-Magic music from *Die Walküre* rang in one's ears. This was a fairylike, tranquil scene, somewhat flattering to one's vanity. Most important of all, it kept the war out of sight.

War had loomed with such suddenness that it seemed improbable. For seven years, ever since entering Naval College, Livitin had become so accustomed to that clanking word, that it had lost all its original meaning for him, like any word does when repeated aloud a hundred or two hundred times in succession. The very guns with which he fired at canvas targets were instruments of war, as was the lieutenant himself. War had woven itself into the very fabric of his life, becoming the recognised purpose and justification of his existence. Nevertheless, these last few days seemed unreal and nightmarish, someone's macabre joke. They demanded serious thought, some sort of decision, the need to tear himself away from the contemplation of his agonising love affair with Irina, and generally, to look about him, which meant losing his equanimity. His usual irony and genial cynicism were out of tune in a world where people were shocked, grieved, alarmed, spoiling for a fight. All this seemed unreal. The only real thing was the fingernail, broken that morning on the mast; the pink epidermis (never uncovered since birth) was sensitive to the slightest touch, a constant reminder of that disquieting word "war".

You could no more recover the peaceful days and the tranquil target practice than you could stick the broken piece of nail back into its place to cover the too sensitive spot. The lieutenant's life, together with the world's history, had been roughly broken, twisted in an unknown direction. Through the fresh fracture of the days death loomed, cold and clear. It was not fear of it that was unpleasant—fear had not yet become tangible amid all the unreality—it was the dawning, but elusive, realisation that something had to be done, and done quickly, before it was too late. Something that had to be grasped, and decided.

Death lurked in the western part of the Gulf of Finland. Like most of the *Generalissimo's* officers, Livitin did not see the first engagement as a victory. The odds were too heavy: our three battleships (two of which, the *Tsesarevich* and the *Slava*, were museum pieces, survivals of Tsushima) against a squadron of up-to-date German dreadnoughts, which outranged our ships by a mile. It was obvious that during the first few hours of the war Germany's powerful fleet would swoop down on the Gulf of Finland to destroy Russia's fleet at a single blow before she had time to put her dreadnoughts into service (they had been five years on the stocks now!).

England alone could save the Russian fleet. England, mistress of the seas, who had merely to raise the guns of her dreadnoughts and battle cruisers at Spithead for the German fleet to put the helm hard over and scuttle off to the North Sea to defend its western coastline. England—the waking dream of Genmor,* who had no right to include her in its plans as an ally. England—blessed name, uttered in wardrooms with yearning hope and desperate belief in a miracle!

England marked time, sending puffs of smoke from her berthed dreadnoughts like a gigantic pipe stuck in the corner of a silent mouth. The newspapers contrived all manner of contortionist stunts in an attempt to fathom this silence. Somewhere in council chambers, concealed from the Navy, flowed a stream of humiliating promises, entreaties, noble gestures, bribes. England was silent, and that silence spelt the doom of the *Generalissimo* in the first hours of war.

The ship was making ready to proceed to the central mine barrage, there to await the German fleet and then go to the bottom, all guns blazing till the water rushed into the embrasures of her last firing turret. Thus did the officers of the *Generalissimo* visualise this first and last encounter of the impending war—some with bitter irony, others in romantic self-consolation. A noble death, the bitter blood of glory, marble tablets in the Naval College chapel, the ribbon of St. George twined round the portraits in *Ogonyok*, and the word “hero” passed down to posterity.

England was silent. To die with a cheer on rapturous lips was stupid, but unfortunately necessary. This might be acceptable to callow sub-lieutenants like Misha Gudkov, but Lieutenant Livitin was past the age when a man dies with relish for death's own stupid sake. But the hour had struck. The time had come to pay off old debts—to pay for the splendid years of parades and reviews, for the cool deception of himself, of Russia and the Navy. It was

* Genmor—Russian abbreviation for General Naval Staff.

necessary to die, just as it was necessary for an officer of the Guards, who issues a worthless cheque to pay a card debt, to put a bullet through his brain.

And so everything appeared to Livitin in a new unexpected light; he was like a man who had suddenly received a diagnosis that he was in the last stage of consumption. The necessity of dying stood between him and life like a cold distorting mirror reflecting familiar things in an unfamiliar way.

And now, as he looked closely at Kozlov, Lieutenant Livitin discovered that he was looking, not at that convenient adjunct to a comfortable cabin—a servant, an efficient valeting machine, but something surprisingly new. The roses, Irina, the cosy flat at No. 7, Mundgatan, the pretty Sasha in her starched cap—all these were identified with each other. For Irina the roses, and for Sasha—what?... The lieutenant smiled wryly at his own thoughts.

“What do *you* think about war, Kozlov?” he asked sympathetically. “Maybe today or tomorrow we’ll be in action.”

“Depends on orders, sir,” Kozlov replied evasively, as he smoothed out the fresh tunic.

“Did you see your Sasha? Did she cry?”

“Naturally.... The lady says to her: ‘Put the roses in water,’ but she sobbed into her pinafore. Had to see to the roses myself. The young lady even laughed.”

“Aren’t you sorry?”

“Sorry for who, sir?”

“Well, for Sasha . . . or for yourself.”

Kozlov was silent.

“Don’t worry. The first battle will show what’s what. If all’s well, please God, I’ll fix your wedding right away and get you leave.”

“Thank you very much, sir. Here’s your links, sir.”

“Never say die, Kozlov!” the lieutenant said with forced cheerfulness. “Take a glass to drink my health.”

“Thank you very much, sir,” Kozlov answered in the same tone as before, then, after some hesitation, added in some embarrassment: “Maybe it’ll blow over, sir? War hasn’t been declared yet. Maybe they’ll get the wind up, and pipe down?”

“Who will?”

“The Swedes, sir.”

“Why the Swedes?”

“On the fo’c’sle they say the Swedes are getting tough. Austria on land, Sweden at sea. Sort of has an eye on Finland.”

Livitin suddenly felt deflated. This fellow, too, was asking the same tiresome question they had been asking themselves in the ward-room—who was the war going to be with? There, they had argued from politics, economics, historical tendencies, and the views of the General Naval Staff, which considered Sweden an unquestionable antagonist, but with Kozlov it was different. He had to be told something clear and simple—but what? Livitin parried the question with another.

“Why, don’t you like the idea of war?”

“You can’t expect me to, sir!” Kozlov said earnestly. “It’s a ruination!”

The lieutenant raised his eyebrows.

“A ruination? On the contrary, you’ll be getting sea pay* all the winter.”

“To the farm, I mean,” Kozlov explained. “We’d only just got on our feet again after the Japanese war, and now they’ll take our horses, sure as anything, sir. My brother would have been called up in a year’s time. We had it worked out so nicely—I’d be back on the farm just when he was going into the army.”

This came as a surprise to Livitin. Kozlov had been with him for over three years, and he had taken it for granted that this quiet well-ordered life together suited Kozlov as much as it did him. It was quite natural to expect Kozlov to remain with him either as a long-service man who would follow him from ship to ship, or as his valet in Irina’s flat, married to Sasha. And suddenly it appeared that Kozlov, despite the pretty Sasha (used to keep him anchored to the house) had his own plans, that neither the Navy, nor the city, nor Sasha, had been able to overcome the peasant in him. Undoubtedly, here was a man who lived a life apart, on a pattern that was obscure and probably intricate, a man obviously endowed with free will. This discovery, too, which destroyed his placid comfortable illusions, Livitin owed to the war that hung over both their heads.

The lieutenant eyed Kozlov gravely and steadily, with a touch of ironical curiosity, as he slowly buttoned up his tunic. The broken fingernail caught on the fabric, reminding him once more of the need to treat things differently. Irony now would be out of place. “Maybe it’ll blow over, sir?...” Too much naive hope had been breathed into that question. Here, in the person of Able Seaman Kozlov, a man stood suddenly revealed, like a passing ship leaping out of a

* An extra allowance for at-sea service (in the Baltic, usually from May to November).

fog—unexpectedly, startlingly. And he was waiting for a reply. Livitin cast about for some simple words with which to answer Kozlov's unexpectedly frank (and in the long run, understandable) question, but before he could find them the man underwent a sudden change before his eyes. It may have been because he fancied a menace in the lieutenant's searching gaze, or because he realised how impolite it was of him to speak about the village just when the lieutenant had offered to arrange his wedding (truth to tell, he had no intention of marrying Sasha, whom he regarded as a sort of extra duty to his officer-servant's status)—but he drew himself up stiffly as if at complaint-muster, his face assuming an air of brisk vacuity.

"We must do our duty, sir," he said distinctly. "Like it or not, if we're ordered to fight we'll fight."

"Get out, you camel!" Livitin said with annoyance, flinging down his towel and striding out of the cabin. He was angry with himself for his ridiculous lyrical impulse. He ought to know better than indulge in heart-to-heart talks with sailors!

A sense of grievance nevertheless remained and spoilt the lieutenant's evening for him. It seemed to him that if Kozlov had not suddenly adopted that officially approved idiotic tone of the jolly jack-tar, the right words would have come to Livitin of themselves and would have helped him to shake off that uneasy feeling that weighed all the more heavily on his mind for being unfamiliar.

He was late for dinner, coming in when the sweet was on the table. At ordinary times, being late for dinner was an unpardonable sin in the wardroom. But Livitin walked nonchalantly into the silvery tinkle of cutlery (like a theatre-goer entering the stalls after the curtain had gone up), knowing that his lateness would be excused and there would be no raised eyebrow of the Commander or malicious little smile of neighbours to greet him. The occasion, if anything, could be flaunted, for everyone, the Commander best of all, knew that Lieutenant Livitin was late because he had been busy cutting down the masts. "Cut the accursed things down, Lieutenant, and God bless you, and us with you, in the task!" Father Feoktist had said earlier in the evening, adding with a shake of the head: "To think what treacherous bastards—God forgive me—we've been carrying about all this time!" The sub-lieutenants eyed Livitin with admiration, and Lieutenant Vetkin with downright envy: in war, as at the races, the thing was to make a good take-off—the fellow would earn his St. Stanislav, if not St. Anne, sure as eggs is eggs!

The conversation at table was lively and interruptive, all the officers talking shop—the coaling, which was nearing completion,

accommodations for the new-arrivals, whether the upper deck planking would be removed, seeing that it was likely to catch fire during an engagement, and a hundred other things thrown up on the crest of the mobilisation wave (although the word itself was studiously avoided). Apparently, naval traditions, too, had broken adrift under the weight of events, because the Commander listened to the Gunner's talk about shell-hoists and magazines, and not only did not stop him with his usual terse remark that there were other, more interesting topics of dinner-table conversation, but even nodded approval, as, raising a hand, he greeted Livitin's entrance, calling across the wardroom to him:

"I say, Livitin, the timber's come down from the dockyard. I want the new topmasts rigged tomorrow morning. Will you manage it, old chap?"

"I hope so," Livitin answered as he took his seat; the next moment, with a grimace of annoyance, he held his empty plate up in the air without looking round. His being late was no reason why the plate should be allowed to grow cool.

A gloved hand promptly whisked away the offending plate.

"Cold," Livitin flung over his shoulder.

The steward put the plate to his cheek, and, shaking his head ruefully, ran to the pantry-hatch. Lieutenant Vetkin looked at him and grinned.

"The servants are all of a dither," he said, toying with his napkin-ring. "They've forgotten to warm your plate up, they gave me the padre's glass, and left poor Greve without his Borzhomi water."

"They've gone gaga. What'll happen if war does break out?" Lieutenant Greve remarked sardonically. "We'll get no dinner at all."

Livitin shrugged his shoulders.

"They've got the village on their minds, they're worried," he said, remembering Kozlov.

"That the servants have got the wind up is only natural. But when headquarters start doing it in their trousers it's more serious," Vetkin began, and Livitin could tell by his animated expression that he had fresh anecdotes to retail. "Hear what Boshnakov said, Livitin?"

"More or less. I only saw him for a moment."

"Fire in a bawdy-house in the middle of a flood," Vetkin laughed. "Yesterday Genmor sent down the German signal code—better late than never! Asked for it to be duplicated for the fleet and the original returned to archives. Would you believe it! They say the Admiral had an answer sent back that, except for four writers, the *Rurik* had no duplicating machine on board."

Livitin smiled. The signal code was a huge book of over a thousand pages and Genmor's slapdash attempt on the very eve of the war to have it duplicated by the fleet service was nothing short of ridiculous.

The signal code, however, was a drop in the ocean compared with the ante-bellum fever that racked the St. Petersburg headquarters, where it played havoc with the neatly filed plans, shaking out into the lap of history many an ugly sin of omission and commission in the "department of victories and conquests".

Every hour brought some new startling revelation. Now it was discovered that there were no destroyers fit for scouting purposes—none had been built for nine years—and oil-burner destroyers were only just being laid down; these, like the dreadnoughts, were not yet ready. Suddenly it was discovered that there was no mazut at Helsingfors for the *Novik*—the only fast destroyer capable of making the sketchiest reconnaissance of the Baltic, but there was a glut of it at Libau navy yard (which, it transpired, could not be defended by the available naval forces, and which it was proposed to blow up if the German fleet attempted to seize it). Now the commandant of the Vyborg fortress presented a bill dated 1906 demanding guard ships that had once been promised him (and included in the plan), but which proved to be non-existent. Now Genmor ordered all academy officers to be detached for service at headquarters, leaving their ships without captains and commanders; whereat the Commander-in-Chief exploded in a stream of ciphered profanity.

Strictly speaking, there was no cipher. Genmor had had no time to draw up a workable wireless code (or perhaps not thought of it), and operation orders were given in a so-called "indecipherable" code of figure combinations based on the ordinary three-flag book, of which thousands of copies were to be found aboard the ships of the fleet, and dozens of copies on the desks of foreign naval attachés. To deceive the latter, a key figure was added to the code numerals (a problem for the average child). But apart from the dangerous simplicity of the cipher, and the tedious arithmetic it involved, this naval Bible, as it was called both on account of its bulk and antiquity, was ill-fitted to translate St. Petersburg's widely broadcast instructions and the list of deficiencies in supply and organisation revealed in Helsingfors. It super-abounded in topgallant masts, footropes, chainwales, flying jib-sheet cringles, and all the flavoursome nomenclature of the sticks-and-strings fleet, in whose day it was composed; with the fond zeal of the archæologist, its fifteen hundred pages preserved such magnificent battle orders as "ram the enemy", "take

the wind" and "prepare to board", and even showed a predilection for philosophical abstractions, such as "confess repentance", "I invoke the blessings of the Lord", "inspiration", "rejoice, rejoicing, rejoiceful". And although it was modernised in 1912 by a special commission, which introduced into it "aeroplane", "Whitehead torpedo", "revolution" ("revolutionary", "revolutionists") and other new terms then current in the Navy, it was often found necessary to spell out a word, using a five-figure combination for each letter.

This unwieldy volume, destined to bear the full weight of naval operations control, soon got jammed in the narrow sheave of mobilisation, like a mishandled hempen rope, which sometimes rucks up in the tackle-block and threatens to snap. On some points it was curiously laconic, and it was hard to tell where you were to "go immediately"—against the enemy or to the bottom? On others it was solemnly prolix: "under the prevailing circumstances", "will you be so kind as to". Both the air and telegraph-wires groaned, sagging, beneath this endless flood of wordy cryptography, copious as the stream of congratulatory telegrams on the Saint's Day of Vera, Nadezhda and Lubov.* Everything, commas included, was coded. The Commander-in-Chief's non-classified orders to close the skerry channels to merchant shipping came back to him in coded messages needlessly confirming that in accordance with his instructions channels so-and-so had been closed to navigation. The flag lieutenants, sweating over their "Bibles", bore this in mind when contriving to guess, by the length of the message, whether it needed deciphering or not. The telegraph was reinforced by officer-messengers, who rushed to and fro—from Helsingfors to St. Petersburg—with lists of ship's numbers found to be missing at headquarters, and from St. Petersburg to Helsingfors with letters from the Chief-of-Staff to the Commander-in-Chief with the obliging but disconcerting information that "an agreement was known to exist between Germany and Sweden". The Gulf of Finland coast turned out to be blind: communication service stations were all too few there. There were plenty of Class 1 pea jackets and jumpers at the bases, Helsingfors and Revel, but very little coal. In this whirl of disgraceful revelations the flag of the Naval Commander-in-Chief quivered at the mast of the *Rurik* in impotent rage, like the heart of that old sailor, and under this flag, staff officers like Boshnakov tried to keep up appearances by pretending to understand what was going on and pursing their lips significantly when men from the ships, the Vetkins, asked questions, and the ships

* Which all fall on one day.—*Tr.*

themselves, under the shadow of the Admiral's flag, were bunkering in preparation for battle and for further revelations of a similar nature.

But as in a cauldron of dirty linen, which, coming to the boil, first forms a scum on top, running over in muddy flakes, while the mass of stinking germ-infested washing scarcely stirs in its dark depths—so the officers of the *Generalissimo* saw only the surface of the Empire's soiled military linen boiling in the fire of war. Nobody (not even the Commander-in-Chief) yet knew how the plan of campaign, drawn up in 1912 and kept hidden without change in securely locked safes, would be carried out. Nobody yet knew that the Army would be doing one thing and the Navy another; that the central mine barrage, the alpha and omega of the naval plan of warfare, was exposed to the enemy on the coastline flanks; that the fleet did not know the fairways of its future battleground—the Gulf of Riga; that the coastal defence would have to be built up hastily during the actual war; that the military Empire, behung with medals in memory of the countless wars it had waged, was unfit for war. Trifles still obscured the essence, and Lieutenant Vetkin continued with his amusing revelations.

"Here's another piece of news," he said with a snort of laughter. "It seems there are no officers at the Kronstadt forts capable of distinguishing our ships from the enemy's, and so Genmor asks the Admiral to send down there a couple of the Navy's lieutenants who know their onions. There's a cushy job for you, Livitin. Now comes the star turn: the Admiral—"

But the star turn was interrupted by the servant who came up to Livitin with the fish. Vetkin waited impatiently for him to retire. Greve remarked with a smile:

"It certainly is a cushy job. Something like a wine taster's: sip, roll your tongue, smack your lips, then pronounce: 'German. Let him have it!' That's all you've got to do, and St. Petersburg right next door. . . . Lovely! Well, what's the star turn?" he added when the servant had gone.

Vetkin tried to look shocked, but apparently the comical side of the situation was too much for him and he burst out laughing again.

"It's from the same comic opera: '*Genmor s'en va-t-en guerre*'. Just imagine it: Admiral like a mouse in travail—where's the German fleet? At Kiel? At sea? What sea—North Sea or Baltic? Admiral frets and fumes. Flags* mizzle off. Wires Genmor: 'Where are the Germans, send secret service reports.' Cool reply: 'Secret intelligence

* Flag lieutenants.

ten days old reported all quiet. Urgently asking agents further information' (note the urgently, gentlemen!). Boshnakov says the old man nearly had a fit. . . ."

Vetkin frantically waved his hand, inviting the others to laugh with him.

"You're tickled pink over it," Livitin said, carefully removing the skin from the sturgeon. "Aren't you, Vetkin?"

"What do you mean?" Vetkin said, still laughing.

"I mean all this is meat and drink to you. Subjects for a funny story."

"Can't a fellow laugh?" Vetkin said, "I don't see anything wrong in enjoying a laugh at the expense of those flustered Admiralty mandarins."

"Even if that flusteration verges on the criminal?" a voice threw in. Livitin looked round and saw Sub-Lieutenant Morozov standing behind Vetkin, leaning his elbow on the fish-tank. Dinner was over and the wardroom was practically deserted.

Livitin had not seen anything of him these last two days. Like Livitin at the mast, Morozov had been busy in the stokehold, where they were cleaning the boilers and hastily changing the burnt bricks. He had a pinched look and there were dark circles round his eyes. His snub-nosed face was flushed and he was drumming his fingers on the glass of the aquarium; from these tell-tale signs Livitin gathered that he was fretting more than ever.

"I fully agree with Livitin," Morozov went on, trying hard to keep his voice level. "One may laugh at foolishness, but if that foolishness is part of a system, one should not laugh, but—"

"Morozov ahoy!" Livitin suddenly sang out, as if hailing a boat from the quarterdeck. "Take in a reef, you've got a list to port."

"Why a reef?" Morozov protested. "Who says a list to port, when we're quietly sinking on an even keel? Can't I swear a bit before I die—after all, it's we who are going to die, not the Admiralty geniuses. What Vetkin has told us is nothing compared with what is still to come. The berries come after the flowers, you know, and those berries have been ripening since Tsushima. . . ."

"Where have you seen Tsushima, I'd like to know?" Greve said, his eyes narrowing. Morozov glanced at the servants, who had begun to clear the table at the subs' end, and lowered his voice.

"Where? I'll tell you where—in the latitude and longitude of our first engagement with the *Moltke* and the *Kaiser*, I can't be more explicit—we engineers are not let into the secrets of operational plans. But we do know certain copybook maxims, and one of them

is that countries that have lost a war were defeated before reaching the battlefield. What I mean is they bore the cause of their defeat within them, within their military organisation, which is a reflection of their political system. Is that idea new to you, Greve?"

Greve shrugged.

"Not so new as absolutely unmilitary—the idle fancy of one of your red sociologists."

"A good guess," Morozov smiled. "As a matter of fact I was quoting the Director of the General Staff Academy, professor of strategy, member of His Majesty's retinue, Lieutenant-General Leyer. . . . Haven't you read him?"

"That's dished him, all right! One up for you, Engineer!" Vetkin laughed.

Livitin smiled into his plate. Greve flushed, but before he could find his tongue, Morozov continued, dropping his voice to an urgent whisper.

"Where do I see Tsushima, you ask? In embryo, right next to us—in our masts, for instance. We've been sailing all this time with our Eiffel Towers, and now—suddenly—they're no good. Our boilers too: we've been going about with them like blithe innocents, and on the very eve of war we suddenly discover that they need overhauling. And now we're tinkering them up in a hurry, any old how. Just when we have to fight, we're crying for water, with one water barge for the whole squadron dashing about like a water-cart at a village fire. And this isn't war yet, the war is still to come—and we'll have to eat those berries that have been ripening in peacetime. The system! That old man Semyonov knew what he was doing when he wrote that book *The Navy and the Naval Department* with his heart's blood. Every thing's just like it was before Tsushima: the Navy and the Admiralty spire, the ships and offices, living men and bemedalled dummies, cannon fodder and smooth theorists. Nothing has changed. Only the "Department" has become more vicious, because the rat race has become tougher, everybody's digging a pit for somebody else, and nobody cares a hang if the ships tumble into it. All they care about is getting an extra rank or medal, and a soft billet ashore. It's a matter for tears, not laughter!"

"In short, 'it's enough to give a man the dysmalls, sir,'" Vetkin said sarcastically, rocking his chair. "'I feel like taking a crack at someone's jaw, but I don't know whose,' as Ipatov confessed to me once when he was tipsy. Is that how you feel, Morozov?"

"That's just it—I don't know whose. Life's too short to go around cracking all the mugs that ask for it," Morozov answered glumly.

"Perhaps we should go up to the looking glass and start on ourselves—we're as much to blame as anybody."

"Thanks very much!" Greve drawled sardonically. "I can understand *you* waxing indignant and denouncing Genmor, it comes natural, sort of old student habit: 'we're just humble heroes, dying for the sins of the aristocratic Gold Braid!' A stale sentiment, by the way, demagogic, too, and absolutely wrong. But as for *us* being to blame—I'm sorry, but I don't follow you. I must be too dense to grasp such compelling logic."

"Of course, we're to blame, we here in the Navy!" Morozov retorted hotly. "Genmor nothing! Genmor's far away! But what have we been doing all these years, here in the ships? Just playing the fool, that's what! Admiral Makarov's been standing on his pedestal in Kronstadt this many a year poking a finger at the passers-by, as much as to say: 'Don't forget the war!' We feel insulted when we're taken out to sea and put through our paces. Frankly, isn't that so? We've been occupied with parades and restaurants, so let's share the blame with headquarters. And don't let us make funny stories on a theme of death, the way Vetkin does."

"Let me tell you, Morozov," Vetkin said scornfully, getting up and pushing his chair up to the table, "let me tell you. stories or no stories, I'll meet death much more calmly than you will, and with greater profit to the ship, I hope. Even now you're hysterical. A fine example to the men! If all the officers thought like you, we'd be heading for Tsushima all right. Thank God, though, we have officers in the ship with common sense enough to see things in their true light—I mean the deficiencies in organisation which are inevitable at the beginning of every war. They will never reach such Pillars of Hercules as you do. Never, and they are the majority."

"Misha Gudkov, for instance," Livitin put in, as he reached for his ice-cream. "There's morale for you! The fellow ought to be put on a chain. He doesn't worry his head about Tsushimas. Take an example from him, Pyotr. To hell with all these philosophisings! I wanted to ask you—if I plugged the stump of that infernal mast with lead, d'you think it'll keep the water out?"

Morozov stared at him like a capering calf checked in midcareer by a ditch—with a puzzled look, head slightly cocked.

"You must caulk the plates, otherwise the damp will get through," he answered mechanically.

Livitin sucked his spoon with relish and was about to continue the conversation in this calm practical vein, when Greve reverted to the interrupted subject.

"I see nothing tragic about it," he said authoritatively. "Antagonism between headquarters and the fleet is a natural phenomenon. It always seems to those below that the people at the top have gone wrong somewhere, muddled things up. This has been well described in *War and Peace*—remember? *Die erste Kolonne marschirt, die Zweite Kolonne marschirt*. . . . But that's not the point, what matters is the morale of the men, of which Livi spoke. Panicky talk like yours can only lower that morale. The Russian Navy"—Greve sat up in his chair—"the Russian Navy has shown in times of stress that it can weather the storms of battle and mistakes of organisation. It's too late now to criticise, and it can do no good. Besides, things are not half so black as you paint them. Boshnakov had just returned from Revel with the Admiral—you should hear what he says about the cruisers and the torpedo division. Talk like yours is only possible here on the battleships, they wouldn't take it so mildly out there as Livitin has done. The enthusiasm! Our sailors are coaling ship like demons, and working on the masts with Livitin of their own free will, but out there volunteers are begging to be sent out in the mine-layers. They fairly mobbed Boshnakov, tossed him in the air, kept asking him when the war would start. The cruiser force is simply spoiling for a fight."

"The chain is no stronger than its weakest link," Morozov observed gloomily.

"Not clever at all!" Greve flared up.

As a matter of fact, Boshnakov did say something of the sort, and Greve, in his way, was right. Russia was yet to be swept by the wave of patriotic manifestations by which people sought to escape the realisation of the war, which had loomed so suddenly on their horizon; they hid their heads, like the ostrich, in the shadow of their national flags. And so there was nothing yet by which the morale of the Navy could be measured. "The men worked like demons"—so far that was the first and only sign of the men's fighting spirit. Boshnakov's stories, losing nothing in the retelling, had snowballed into a legend about ship's crews spoiling for a fight. The battleships drew comfort from the "splendid spirit" of the cruisers, and the cruisers, in turn, held the battleships up as an example of "splendid morale". The cruisers (or rather the wardrooms of the cruisers) felt more cheerful about it: the prospect of a pitched battle did not loom so large before them as it did before the officers of the battleships. Their task was less perilous—reconnaissance, cruiser engagements, coast bombardment, and the sinking of destroyers.

Cruiser actions, reconnaissance, destroyer attacks! Unwieldy vessels with a high freeboard and a battery of factory chimneys almost as numerous as the guns they carried; slow-moving targets for submarines, coffin ships of Tsushima and pre-Tsushima days—*Diana* (launched 1899), *Rossiia* (1896), *Gromoboi* (1899), *Bogatyr* (1901) What reconnaissance, what engagements could they undertake?

"I tell you what, Greve, let's drop this legend about the might of the Russian Navy! Talk about fighting spirit! Ships like these are hopeless—not even the Holy Spirit can help them," Morozov said brusquely, coming away from the aquarium. "I can see this invincible armada of old caravels going out to meet the German ships, which have just come off the stocks, and which will send them to the bottom. It's a shame to die like that! If we, a new ship, the only hope of the Russian fleet, need a thorough reconditioning of our boilers, can you imagine what a big refit those old hulks will need! Why, the whole fleet needs it from truck to keelson! All the rivets have to be rebated, all the pea-shooters that we call guns have to be changed, all the old guts thrown out and new. . . . Oh, but where are we going to get them!"

Morozov made a hopeless gesture and walked out.

"A nihilist, my word, a nihilist!" Vetkin laughed. "No, really, if I didn't know that Morozov was inclined to hysteria, I'd ask Shiyonov to put him under arrest for a week. What's up with him? Has he got a fiancée waiting for him ashore, or what?"

Greve made a vague gesture, as much as to say: "What can you expect from an engineer?"

He watched Vetkin leaving the wardroom and looked up at Livitin.

"I'm surprised at you, Livi," he broke the silence, slowly stubbing out his cigarette. "You always lend such a friendly ear to that cheap demagoguery. When I tried to interrupt that"—he searched for a word—"that soap-box orator, you didn't support me once. And you're the only man whose opinion carries weight with him. This tub-thumping is so unseemly in a naval officer, yet it seems to amuse you."

"In a way it does," Livitin answered, extinguishing his own cigarette in the same leisurely fashion. "It has a fresh flavour."

"And a sharp one too?"

"Possibly."

"Even if it's red ketchup?"

"I prefer the English cuisine," Livitin said with a faint smile. "Russian pies are much too heavy, and a bad indigestion leads to a sluggish mind."

Greve smiled. At last, after the tiresome and vapid dispute with Morozov, in which a spade had been called a spade, one could relax in a verbal duel with Livitin. In that respect Livi was an excellent companion.

"Don't forget, Livi, that highly spiced food is bad for the constitution. Immoderation, especially in politics, is liable to cause bloody flux, and I for one hold no brief for that infectious disease. On shipboard it's likely to take a very virulent form."

Livitin shut his cigarette-case with a snap and slipped it into the breast pocket of his tunic. The socket of his broken fingernail felt the cold smooth touch of the metal. Greve's eyes were expressionless, too expressionless for so interesting a conversation. Greve, the climber, darling of the Helsingfors ladies, guardsman in naval uniform, suddenly appeared to him in quite a new light. He reminded himself of the incident with the stokers last spring and the unsavoury role Greve had played in it.

Livitin smiled.

"I have no desire to experience either diarrhea or constipation, which would mean a long spell of treatment in our Russian Bastille—Schlüsselburg. Your thoughtful prognostication is wrong, my dear boy. You're a poor mind reader."

For a second or so the two lieutenants held each other's eyes—Greve searchingly, Livitin with keen curiosity. Two servants stood a little way off, waiting to clear the table when the officers had finished their conversation. Greve rose to his feet first.

"If I were you, Livi, I'd impress that youngster with the absurdity of his behaviour, especially in time of war."

"I never thought much of myself as a teacher, Greve," Livitin said, pushing back his chair. "Don't tell me we're going to have three watches a day all through the war?" he added with a comic sigh as he made way for Greve.

He went straight to Morozov's cabin, where he found its occupant in his underclothes, about to change into working rig.

"Good!" Livitin said from the doorway. "Don't be in a hurry to put on your trousers. You need a taste of the strap."

"I don't see why."

"You're too hotheaded, my dear Robespierre furioso. Spare your nerves."

"Yes, but—"

"Take some bromide. Must you speechify? A fine audience you've chosen! Vetkin, that imbecile, retailer of funny stories, who would sell his own mother for a good joke. Greve, who looks at you narrow-

eyed. I can't understand such a waste of energy. What do you think you are—the Navy's conscience?"

Morozov all but wailed in his distress.

"But Nikolai, I just can't keep silent! It's so galling to feel yourself a mere puppet in somebody else's hands. To realise that they can send you to an ignoble and wretched death in a coffin ship with your 'splendid morale'. It's simply maddening! You know it as well as I do—all that play-acting, that tacit understanding among all us officers, who are bound by oath and discipline, to play up to one another, to reassure one another of the Navy's might, to believe blindly in inevitable victory, and hush up all the shameful things that are going on around us. Going to fight, the idiots, when we'll be lucky to just keep afloat. And you see these things probably better than I do—I'm only an engineer, I can only guess what's going on—but you see it and say nothing. Why are you silent?"

"Put a mustard plaster to your neck when you turn in, Petruchio," Livitin said, lapsing into his usual bantering tone and sitting down at the table. "You're asking for trouble. How many times must I tell you that this is a warship? Believe me, I can see it all quite clearly—a fire in a bawdy-house in the middle of a flood, as our friend Vetkin put it. And like you, I'm preparing, by fasting and prayers, to lay down my life for king and country, for stupidity—my own and those above me. The lease of a happy life has expired, my young friend, and now we've got to pay up. We must have the courage to face the music. I have no intention of thumping the ship's armour with my bare fists, and I wouldn't advise you to either. You'll only bruise 'em, and it won't help you. Now tell me, Petruchio, what makes you do it?"

Morozov, having at last got his head through the narrow opening in the stiff boiler-suit, threw him a swift glance.

"Candidly?"

"Of course."

"I'll tell you the truth then."

"Go ahead."

"It may give you a shock."

"I'm sitting tight."

The lieutenant actually gripped the edge of his seat with both hands, then raised a warning finger.

"Stop! I think I can guess. Revolution?"

Morozov nodded. Clad in boiler-suit, snub-nosed and tousled, with no distinguishable marks of officer's rank, he reminded Livitin of his own schooldays. Similar tousled students, with the same yearn-

ing for immediate revolution come what may, had expounded to a study circle of fellow-students the meaning of the Manifesto of October 17. It all looked like something one had seen in a theatre. Life had lowered its safety curtain over youthhood.

"It isn't hard to guess," Livitin said with a sympathetic nod. "Revolution! The cure for all ills, from the starving peasant down to the pitched battle on the high seas. How simple it all is to you: revolution, a change of political systems, new men at the—what do you call it?—the helm of state—hey presto!—and Sub Morozov is happy: war staved off, the fleet safe, Russia too, the muzhiks eating chicken every day, and the Russian Empire—sorry, Republic—enjoying peace and harmony. Will Germany and Austria put off the war, too, I wonder?"

Morozov hesitated a moment, then said doggedly:

"War or peace are in the hands of the government. The new government can always declare the cause of war to be unfounded, that's all."

Livitin burst out laughing.

"Excuse me, but as a matter of purely scientific interest, are the causes of the war known to you?"

"Well, no. . . ."

"Nor to me either. Apart from our brother-Slavs and the cross on Saint Sophia, these causes are known only to the men standing at the helm of state. Whoever it is at the helm—whether the Court or Parliament—believe me, it makes no difference. Hence, the foregone conclusion: if there'll be a republic, there'll be a war, and your belated wailings have got nothing to do with it. It will simply mean a fair-sized earthquake added to the fire in the bawdy-house in the middle of the flood. There you have a conservative forecast for the revolution over the next few days."

"Smug pessimism!" Morozov growled.

"Keep your hair on. Nothing very 'smug' about knowing you're going to die. You mentioned that book by Mr. Semyonov a little while ago. I've read it. I read it during my idealistic schooldays. I remember, it cut me to the heart. Let me tell you, I joined the Navy because I had a criminal passion for it. Tsushima haunted me, and I thought I could reform the Navy. I was young, of course, and the thing looked very simple. I soon shut up after a couple of hard smacks on the noddle. You may be able to find my memorandum about these Eiffel Towers in the Admiralty archives. I didn't even get a reply. There would have been no need to cut down those masts today. You spoke about the cruisers too. Soon after I got my commission I drew up a plan of my own accord, estimating the

number of fast warm-sided cruisers that would be needed for various operations in the Baltic and how much this would cost. Instead they are building battleships, they've laid down a high seas fleet, battle cruisers, which will flounder about the Gulf like elephants in a duck-pond. The rats have probably eaten that plan. All I got for my pains was a rap on the knuckles—'mind your own business, young fellow-me-lad'. I've got other hopeless plans in my head, but that doesn't mean I've got to bang it on the armour. I wouldn't use my fists for it now either. I write no plans and submit no memorandums. On the contrary, these last few years I have been indulging in debauchery of mind and egocentrism, and I wish the same to you."

Morozov gave him a gloomy look and put on his cap.

"Like blind puppies," he said wearily. "We're like blind puppies, poking about in the dark. Or still worse, having ourselves taken by the scruff of the neck and poked into the service, into war, into death. Mark my word, there'll be few people left soon who are willing to play this game. You wait till the war gets people stirred up."

"What's the use of whimpering," Livitin said, making for the door. "There goes the pipe, what a jolly tune! Come along, boy, back to our jobs—I to the mast, and you to the bottom, your stokehold. By the way, I wouldn't use that Big-Refit expression of yours in the figurative sense, if I were you."

"Why not?" Morozov said blankly.

"What sainted innocence! What d'you mean, talking about the overhaul from truck to keelson, and in front of Greve too! Take my advice—be the quiet little snake, but the poisonous. You never know what may happen, as Boatswain Netoporchuk says."

"What's Greve got to do with it," Morozov said, still uncomprehending.

Livitin pulled Morozov's cap down over his nose and pushed him towards the door.

"Down to the stokehold with you, young man! It'll be safer for everybody down there! Come along!"

CHAPTER 11

A chain of rust-red barges and lighters girded the *Generalissimo* like a gigantic lifebelt, keeping her afloat on the wave of war that swept over Russia. Coal, shells, flour, surgical dressing, meat, torpedoes, engine-oil, gunpowder, cabbages were transferred from the barges to her underwater storage space by various ways and means,

building up the ship's energy for coming battle. Another barge was due to arrive in the evening to take away the things that would not be required in battle. As soon as dinner was over, therefore, Shiyanov jumped into the launch to make a round of the ship with the Boat-swain in order to find room for the barge alongside.

From the launch the *Generalissimo* looked quieter: no signs of the muted commotion on her decks were visible from here. The two derricks towering over the deck on each side were idle (the crew were finishing their meal), and the mere throng of barges was no indication of the hurrah's nest which the Admiralty had caused on board by its order to have delivery of all stores completed by morning. Somewhere in a secret drawer lay the sealed orders for mobilisation, giving intake arrangements and categorically ruling out such a Sunday-market crowd of barges. This document, however, had not come into force yet, because mobilisation had not been announced yet.

Such a state of affairs would have spelt disaster to any commander. But Shiyanov, by appearing simultaneously in different places, by shouting himself hoarse and handing out "packets" where packets were due, managed to achieve some measure of success. Coaling had not interfered with shell loading; cabbages and meat had happily avoided encounters with torpedoes on deck; the men had been at it without a break since four o'clock in the morning, and now, after a late supper, were to be piped again for duty.

The *Generalissimo* stood with her head facing west. Behind her massive silhouette, sunset had drawn its yellow silken sheet taut across the sky, like a curtain concealing the scene-shifting in the theatre of war. Behind this screen the Baltic was preparing the unknown. Perhaps the German squadron had already put out from Kiel. Perhaps the Swedish fleet had already joined it at the rendezvous point somewhere off Gotthland. Perhaps the attack would be a sudden one, without a declaration of war, as at Port Arthur. Everything was possible, nothing was known; the yellow curtain of the western horizon was impenetrable. There had been no reconnaissance. It was left for the Admiralty to approve the decision of the Commander-in-Chief to prepare the ships for combat without waiting for the official mobilisation announcement and the Germans' first shell that would rip that accursed curtain apart.

The launch rounded the stern—the only part of the ship free from the cluster of barges and lighters. It could not be used for the expected barge, however: here were the two gangways—the officers' and the ordinary ship's gangway—the quarterdeck, designated for watch duty, and the Captain's cabin. Shiyanov snapped his fingers with

annoyance and looked up so as not to see this inviting but forbidden spot.

The huge eagle clamped to the armour over the long brassplate bearing the ship's name spread its serrated wings menacingly and stared at Shiyanov with its two rapacious heads. Seeing it, Shiyanov frowned: coal dust had settled on its wings like fine black flour—an irritating sight to the naval eye.

“Kornei,” he said reproachfully, “what’s this?”

The Chief Boatswain, standing behind him, raised his leathery snub-nosed face to the eagle.

“There’s been no scrub-round, sir, as you know. We’ll start cleaning up soon as we’re through. It’s been an all-hands job, sir, no time for eagles.”

“It doesn’t look good,” Shiyanov went on. “Rather awkward! Boats passing, the Admiral may come. . . . It’s the little things that count on a ship.”

This thought was pleasing, and Shiyanov looked up again at the grimy eagle as it floated past overhead. It was this attention to minor details that gave a real commander his cachet! The eagle had become a symbol. The ship was preparing feverishly for battle; everywhere was coal and dirt, the decks were cluttered with barrels and cabbage leaves; it was more like a marketplace than a ship. But when, from the stern of a toil-exhausted ship, the visitor is met by a spit-and-polish eagle fit to face review, then everybody understands that the dirt and mare’s nest on board are only temporary things compelled by circumstances, and that the ship is a real man-of-war, efficient and well organised, with a smart commander. So does a trivial detail—a well trimmed fingernail, say—betray a man’s social position, no matter how he may be dressed. Shiyanov, in his mind, could see the comforting and dazzling splendour of the eagle, shining through the murk of coal dust and the din of loading operations.

“It won’t do, Boatswain!” he repeated emphatically. “Tell a man off to clean it!”

The Boatswain, however, protested. This shrewd old man, who had risen to the rank of warrant officer, knew how to deal with the Commander. He was the latter’s right-hand man, and acted the old family nurse, who grumbles at her mistress. Sometimes this would lead him into stubborn arguments with Shiyanov, whose orders none of the crew would ever dream of challenging.

“Just as you like, sir. It’s your business, of course. But it’s silly, sir, if you don’t mind me saying it—what with the sun going down

already—who's going to see it? You say the Admiral—as if the Admiral doesn't know the topsy-turvy state things are in. Besides, where am I to get a man for the job? You know as well as I do that the hands are all told off. . . .”

The Boatswain's rambling complaint was cut short by Shiyanov, who had been up and about since early in the morning.

“That's enough! Do as you're told!” he snapped.

“Aye, aye, sir,” the Boatswain answered, but his look plainly said that one way or another he would dodge that eagle. The obstinate old fool! Shiyanov turned away. He couldn't very well hammer into that thick head what the burnished eagle stood for.

The launch moved on towards the bows, and new cares occupied the Commander's mind. The eagle, almost black from the coal dust that clung to it, was left behind, a solitary threat in space. Against the yellow backcloth of sunset it looked like the black eagle on the imperial standard. Russia was meeting her unseen enemy with that victorious banner.

This remarkable bird had flown into Russia four and a half centuries ago. It bore little resemblance then to the one that was now riveted to the bows of the great ship. Heraldry, that noble science of armorial bearings, had modified the aspect of this symbolical bird in strict conformity with the character of the given period. When that vagrant bird, which had just plummeted into the Bosphorus of the Byzantine Empire, gingerly alighted on the third rate crown of Ivan III, its two little heads looking round with dull suspicion (and well they might, for it was a sorry kingdom!)—this heraldic emigrant was a seedy-looking creature: its wings were limp and drooping, its feathers, plucked by the Osmanli, were sparse, its feet skinny—it would be lucky to keep body and soul together in this realm of homespun. Its talons alone looked strong and clutching, promising the boyarhood of Muscovy, which had given the bird shelter, to prove its worth in the future. And the first prey to quiver in those talons was Sovereign Great Novgorod—the first republic to be swallowed by the growing monarchy. Ivan Grozny, with a habitual gesture, plunged the six-pointed cross of the Orthodox Church into the eagle's neck. The blow stretched the necks in opposite directions, the heads staring greedily towards Siberia and Livonia, consumed with a desire to tear off a goodly chunk for the household of the first Russian tsar. But came the rumble of peasant riots, and the first eagle was obliged, like a startled hen, to hop from one tsarist head to another with little heed for genealogy. From this rough and tumble the eagle emerged a wiser bird: two crowned

heads having proved inadequate, heraldry judiciously planted a third crown in place of the six-pointed cross. In such manner was it brought home to the world at large that not by God's will alone would the Russian Empire have its being, but by the strong rule of the Tsar.

In the corn chandlery of Alexei Mikhailovich the eagle fared well and grew fat. It presided in the busy shop under its huge crown, as if under a market awning, knocking unruly heads with its sceptre and tightly grasping the Empire, round as a copper penny, in its left claw. It was time to think of leaving the marketplace and appearing in Europe. And so the Heraldic Office raised the drooping wings of the double-headed eagle. It grew thinner again, but this time it was the muscular leanness of a well-trained predator. The chain of St. Andrew, conferred by the first Russian emperor, clattered on its strong breast when, together with Peter, it dashed to and fro between the shores of the Azov and the newborn capital on the Neva marshes.

Then it alighted on the roof of Catherine's palace, preening its feathers, spattered with the blood of Pugachov's uprisings and countless Turkish wars. The nobles grew stronger. They readily gave the Empress their serfs for her endless recruitments. The army pressed upon the Turkish and Polish frontiers, pushing back these irksome barriers and bringing home from their crusades on the wings of their spread eagle the new armorial bearings of subdued kingdoms.

And then, for the first time, the humid wind of the Black Sea drew from the Crimea to St. Petersburg. The eagle turned one of its heads southward, saw the narrow slit of the Bosphorus, and stood transfixed in that rapt attitude with unflickering gaze.

The other head looked anxiously west. There Napoleon's blockade had squeezed the umbilical chord that fed English gold into the infant mouth of Russian trading capital. The nobility, as at the hunt, waved their red-banded caps at the imperial eagle, driving it to new wars. "Tally-ho! Halloo!"

And it left its perch, obedient to the call, acquiring in this flight a breadth of wingspan reminding it and Europe of the recent soaring flight over Leipzig, Berlin, Paris and Vienna of Alexander's proud and graceful eagle. Heraldry, deferring to the respectful chorus of European powers, promptly substituted meaningful thunderbolts and a crown of laurels for the coin of the realm in the eagle's talons. For over a century Europe *had grown accustomed to identify Russia's moral strength with the military strength of the gendarme*

*of Europe. In its eyes the prestige of the young Russian race was inseparably bound up with that of tsarism, that unshakable authority, which strongly safeguarded the existing "order of things".**

The cudgel, however, was more familiar than the romantic thunderbolts. And the Nicholas eagle hastened to pick up the sceptre which the new tsar had dropped in Senate Square, wet with the blood of the rebellious Guard, and brandished it warningly over the land like a gauntlet. Nicholas I fed the bird with raw meat out of his own hand; its plumage bristled, its beaks grew sharper, its heads were stretched again in the direction of the Black Sea Straits and Europe, and no one now would have recognised in the cruel, ravening imperious eagle, the once phlegmatic fattened capon of peaceful corn-chandler days. It swooped with folded wings, dropping like a stone on insurgent Hungary, and finished with the revolution at a single blow; it wheeled in broad circles over the Caucasus, devastating the nests of the mountain tribes; its predatory shadow covered Persia, a threat to the English money that flooded Persia's markets. The Empire thrived and expanded and the eagle's wings rose again in the insolent pride of despotic power; the Empire robbed its own and other peoples, robbed them with the aid of armies, cheap corn, vodka, gendarmes, manufactories, and government departments.

But the wheels of history turned aside, creaking, from the ancient bypaths of feudalism, and the imperial throne shook on its historic chariot, dropping forced reforms at each jolt. The road was paved with them. The eagle was bleeding. The Crimean campaign was the first defeat of the swollen monarchy. The eagle's two heads engaged in fierce contest, the house of landowners and young bourgeoisie was divided against itself, coming to terms now and again in order to deal with the common foe rising within the racked and tortured country—the revolution. This peace-time occupation became a matter of routine with the royal bird. Fat and ponderous, like its new master—Alexander the Peacemaker, it sat on the Empire, covering it with its body from end to end, and unseen by Europe, tearing the growing revolution with its sharp claws, while flirting beady-eyed with France, who was luring it with the gold grains of her francs.

But driven again from its roost by the cries of Russia's banks, unused to flying, plump with good living, the eagle, heavily and reluctantly, flew eastward thousands of miles distant to embark on ill-judged colonial adventure. Port Arthur saw the second defeat, the

* Italics on pp. 244, 245, 246 are quotations from Lenin. Cf. *Collected Works*, Vol. 8, "The Fall of Port Arthur".

collapse of Russia's military power. Alas, those years! When had you ever seen such years, black-and-gold imperial eagle? Why did not heraldry vest you with the new attributes of victory—the gallows and the knout? New banners made nests for you upon their cloths, the new reliable imperial guard—the “Union of the Russian People”, with its Black Hundred merchant thugs, bore you triumphantly on their gonfalons through the pogrom-subdued streets of Gomel, Kishinev, Belostok, and Sedlets. The Black Hundreds moved through flaming Russia, clinching the victories of the Semyonov Regiment; the Black Hundreds retrieved for the imperial eagle Moscow, Odessa, Kronstadt, Sveaborg, the Kingdom of Poland, Krasnoyarsk, Irkutsk and Winter Palace Square. And on its turret, overlooking the dank casemates of the Fortress of Peter and Paul, the double-headed eagle calmly and heavily realighted, satiated with blood and flesh, and with an intense war itch gathering in its sharp claws.

And now we find it looking down again at the Straits and at Europe from the stern of the *Generalissimo* with red, half-crazed predatory eyes. The gilt of its plumage, refurbished by French loans, shines anew. St. George rides bravely to victory on a slender-legged steed. The arms of vanquished kingdoms jostle each other on its wings to make room for the Turkish crescent, the keys of Danzig and the Galician wheat-ears. The double-headed eagle stirs its wings in preparation for its fifty-third war flight.

But there will be no victories. The year of Tsushima and Port Arthur had hung upon its wings the dead load of history. The military might of the double-headed predator proved to be a sham. In attempting to check the march of history by the blows of its strong beaks, it devoured itself. *Tsarism has proved to be a hindrance to the organisation of up-to-date efficient warfare, that very business to which tsarism dedicated itself so wholeheartedly, of which it was so proud, and for which it offered such colossal sacrifices. . . . A whited sepulchre is what tsarism has proved to be in the field of external defence, which was its favourite speciality.*

And although Raymond Poincaré promised brand-new modern weapons; although the most up-to-date battleships were coming off the stocks; although Captain Andreadi went sky-riding in a Russian military plane with Princess Shakhovskaya, the first woman pilot, astonishing the world with his skilful handling of a lady in the air; although pneumatic hammers clattered furiously in the dockyards of Revel—it was doomed, was the once victorious imperial military eagle. The first gunshots in East Prussia would lay bare the system's festering sores covered up by its gilded wings. The Masurian marshes

would engulf its mainstay—the Guard. Unreliable replacements would pour into the army, driven along by the blows of its tenacious claws. The Tsar, in his last desperate hope for a military miracle, would woo death by offerings of a thousand men for each feather of the four-hundred-year-old eagle, and Death would squeeze the proffered hand, peering with a grin into the vaulted gloom of the Ekaterinburg cellar. The eagle's doom was sealed on July 16, the day the Tsar signed the manifesto for the last mobilisation of the Russian Army and the Russian Imperial Navy.

Mobilisation was actually under way already. Live shells lay about on the deck like ungainly sea lions. The mine-layers stood at Porkkala-Udd, sharing the fleet's nervous impatience as they waited to drop their protective barrage of mines. Picket-boats, with idling engines, strained at the booms like horses at a hitching-post during a fire, eager to dash away and do something to speed up the creaking machinery of mobilisation. The black dust of the coal taken on board for battle lay on the deck, on the white cap-cover of the sentry at the flag, and like an ominous veil of crepe on the wings of the eagle aft. On the deck the men were being told off for shipwork—for the third time in twenty-four hours.

The mainmast, cut down to half its height, stuck out over the after turret, its charred spirals with their gigantic threatening fingers a hideous foretaste of things to come. The men in coaling rig, with cap-covers on their heads instead of caps, stood in broken ranks, waiting for the order to carry on. Suspended cradles, forming a broad staircase as at horse-race stands, ran down into the coal barges. A floating crane bent its long neck over the shell lighter; the grey-haired operator, with his cheek tied up, was chewing the last of a chunk of bread as he looked out of his smoke-grimed glass cab with the apathetic air of a railway switchman. The deck was cluttered with coal-baskets, shells, barrels, cases, bales and bookcases dragged out of the ship's library. The *Generalissimo* was ransacking her magazines, lockers and store-rooms, picking out the things she would need for battle and dumping all unwanted gear ashore. To the latter belonged the practice shells (those Lieutenant Livitin had used for target practice), wooden furniture, awnings, carpets, boat sails, and the rickety armchairs which the officers used for relaxation on the quarterdeck. This chaotic jumble resembled a luggage platform at a railway junction. The whole Russian Imperial Navy was hastily changing trains, boarding an express with the laconic sign under its windows: "Harbour—Battle".

Picking his way across the littered deck, Lieutenant Livitin reached the line of Company 4. Seryozhin, in his usual fearsome booming voice, barked "Shun!" and Livitin surveyed the ranks.

The mast demanded a last supreme effort. Another twenty feet of its spiralled steel had to be cut down that day and the stump covered with steel plates with a hole drilled in them for the new wooden mast. The men had been working twice round the clock and were fagged out. They looked haggard, and many of them wore bandages over palms and fingers burnt in handling the hot steel.

"Keep it up, boys, we'll be finished today!" Livitin said in as brisk a tone as he could muster. "Nenovinsky, take your party to the magazine—unload the practice shells, the barge is alongside."

Gunner's Mate Nenovinsky, captain of Turret No. 4, a tall, elderly, whiskered man resembling a provincial telegraphist, walked down the line with a grave air, counting off his men.

"Leave those who have been working on the mast," Livitin told him. "Don't take Volkovoi either. Seryozhin, fall out those who've been working on the mast with Volkovoi."

"Volkovoi's on sentry go, sir," Seryozhin said sheepishly, feeling that he had made a blunder there.

The lieutenant shot him a swift glance and as swiftly looked away. Beads of sweat broke out on Seryozhin's devoted countenance. He knew only too well what that glance meant: it meant a long tête-à-tête in the lieutenant's cabin (Livitin never swore at his Chief Petty Officer in front of the men) on the subject of Seryozhin's stupidity—a humiliating conversation. He should have known that Volkovoi was the lieutenant's right-hand man on this mast job. Seryozhin's face registered contrition, and he heaved a belated sigh.

Livitin stood frowning. Seryozhin's stupidity had robbed him of Volkovoi's services for twenty-four hours.

To relieve him of guard-duty was almost as difficult as getting a sentence of death commuted. The guard-duty regulations, endorsed sixty years ago by royal edict, had the man in their octopuslike grip. Some other way had to be sought. Livitin's eye ran over the ranks.

"Where's Tulmankov?"

Seryozhin went hot all over (Christ, what a day!) and he explained in a flustered voice:

"Sorry, sir, but Tulmankov's been told off by the Commander to clean the eagle . . . just before the hands had fallen in . . . because he emptied the mess-can on the deck . . . missed the ash chute, sir . . . just as he was passing forward . . . caught him in the act, sir. . . ."

A flash of anger, surprising even to himself, blotted out the line of men before Livitin's eyes.

"Belokon!" he called out in such a sharp tone that Seryozhin started.

Belokon took a step forward.

"Take your men and lower the cut iron to the deck," Livitin continued, struggling hard to control his voice. "Get the plating up, prepare for riveting. Seryozhin, get your men to work the tackle, like they did this morning. Where's the Commander?"

"In the waist, sir," Seryozhin answered hastily and with the sympathy one shows to a very sick patient.

Livitin swiftly crossed the deck, followed by Seryozhin's sympathetic glance.

"He aint 'arf wild," he said to Belokon in an undertone. "There's going to be ructions in a minute with the Commander. He can be nasty when he's crossed! You'd better take your men and be off or you'll get a packet too."

Livitin tacked along the deck, swearing to himself. The absence of Volkovoi and Tulmankov took the wind out of his sails. Both of them—fitters in the past—had been selected by him to cut the steel tubing of the mast; this, in fact, was what accounted for his scornful rejection of help from the engine-room artificers; he had hoped to confound the sceptics at the lieutenants' table, who averred that in the end he would be obliged to call in the Varangians when it came to riveting the plating over the mast stump. And now both of them were put out of action at the crucial moment. One through the wrong-headed zeal of that fool-born Seryozhin, who didn't know any better, the other through the whim of Shiyanov, who was too narrow-minded to recognise special qualities in a sailor. The officious jackass!

Livitin found Shiyanov with the first company. The boatswains, led by Netoporchuk, followed him down the line like a religious procession. When Livitin caught up with them, Shiyanov was briefing Netoporchuk, whose lips stirred as he repeated the orders to himself in case, God forbid, he got them muddled up. Livitin halted in a waiting attitude. Netoporchuk was being instructed to have all the unwanted wood thrown into the barge.

"Tsushima jitters," Livitin thought wryly. The precautions smacked of the ostrich hiding its head in the sand.

The spectre of fire had haunted the fleet ever since Tsushima, when the iron ships, overloaded with woodwork, had burned like bonfires, touched off by the red-hot Japanese shells. Although it was

not so much the woodwork and furniture that burned as it was the numerous coats of paint on every iron surface, the post-Tsushima shipbuilders, warned by disastrous precedent, took good care to have all doors, ladders, cabin cupboards and the crew's lockers, and even writing tables, made of iron. All this fireproof ironwork, in turn, received its regular coats of paint laid one on top of the other twice a year. This, as Livitin pointed out in wardroom disputes, would catch fire more easily than wood. He was for a minimum of comfort in the officers' cabins. He voiced the opinion that the thing was not to build fireproof ships, but to be able to manoeuvre your ships to avoid gun fire at point-blank range. He sarcastically suggested the idea of a fireproof piano made of the best Krupp steel.

"Is that clear?" Shiyarov, meanwhile, was saying to Netoporchuk; behind his back the Chief Boatswain encouraged Netoporchuk by twitching his scrubby eyebrows and pursing his thick lips significantly. "Clean out the bosun's stores and cordage-rooms—they're chock-full of old junk. All extra wood—get me? Use your own discretion. Leave only what's really necessary. Chuck out all the rest."

"In case of fire. A shell hit may start it smouldering, see?" the Chief Boatswain contributed.

"Yes sir," Netoporchuk said slowly, as if some thought were working in him. Then he looked up, struck by an idea. "What about the deck, sir? And the boats?"

"Did I say anything about boats?" Shiyarov demanded. "Did I say anything about the deck, you meathead?"

"You've been told to clean out the boatswain's stores and cordage-rooms—understand?" Kornei inserted, showing a fist by way of emphasis. "Take ten men, and be off!"

Livitin chuckled inwardly. Netoporchuk had hit the mark. Livitin was no admirer of Shiyarov, whom he considered a dolt; just now he simply hated him for the shabby trick he had played him with Tulmankov. Netoporchuk's question had reproduced yesterday's discussion at dinner with the faithfulness of a camera; during that discussion Livitin had made a sarcastic remark about the deck planking. The brass strips running across it and covering the joints of the teak planks were yet another symptom of the fears aroused by Tsushima. The idea was that, on mobilisation, the ship would rip up these brass seams and throw off her ornamental wooden trappings, laying bare the massive, darkly glinting panoply of her deck armour.

But the Captain and Shiyarov had decided not to strip the deck. The white deck, scrubbed and scoured day in day out, was the pride of the ship. The bare slippery plating beneath it was ugly

beyond words. No naval officer worthy of the name could bring himself to do it. "After all," Shiyanov said in self-justification, "a fire on the upper deck can easily be put out, but a fire below..."—here he raised a portentous finger, considering the discussion closed.

"One moment, sir," Livitin said, and Shiyanov moved away from the Boatswain. "May I ask you to release Tulmankov, I need him just now on the mast."

Shiyanov turned to him a tired and annoyed face.

"Tulmankov? Who's that?"

Livitin's explanation brought a frown to the Commander's face.

"Sorry, Livitin, but it's not my habit, as you are well aware. I never cancel punishments."

"I'm not asking you to cancel his punishment, but to postpone it. I don't care if he works all night on that eagle—when we're through with the mast."

Shiyanov looked at him reflectively.

"No," he said at last. "What's the hurry? He must have put the polish on by now, he's got to finish the job. When he's done—by all means—take him. Besides, it demoralises the men. Punishment must be instantaneous, otherwise it misfires. Sorry, Livitin, but I'm busy..."

Shiyanov turned back to the ranks. Again Livitin felt a film rising before his eyes, blotting out the ranks and Shiyanov facing them. Since when had he started to take ship's affairs so close to heart? Ever since his sub-lieutenant days he had worn an armour of serene and cynical indifference—and now these sudden flashes! His nerves probably had given in these last few days. If he started talking again to the Commander they were sure to have a row, and hard words would be spoken. They would be home-truths, no doubt, but were they worth jangling his nerves over? Shiyanov was not one to be talked out of a thing, and it was of such idiots as he that the service was made up. Damn it all, Tulmankov wouldn't spend the whole night cleaning that eagle's feathers! Livitin walked away, thinking how to manage without him and without calling in the artificers to help with the riveting.

Tulmankov was sitting in a narrow cradle lowered over the stern. The huge brass eagle screwed to the plating menaced him with the open beaks of its two heads. On the cradle stood a box containing a tin of polish and some rags. The eagle's rounded wings were already covered with the white pungent-smelling fluid, which was turning green on the brass surface. Polishing took time—the longer

you left the polish on the brass the brighter shine you could give it. So Tulmankov sat in enforced idleness, contemplating the crowned bird.

The imperial spread eagle with the twin ferocious heads was impressed on the stern of the *Generalissimo* like the trademark of some solid firm. It guaranteed the ship's battle fitness, guaranteed victory, and certified that she belonged to the Imperial Russian Fleet—the fleet of Nakhimov, Lazarev and Senyavin, the fleet of Navarino, Hangö and Varna. It was a fake, because confidence in the trademark had been undermined by Tsushima and Port Arthur, but what solid firm will have scruples about putting its trademark to things that are patently unfit for use?

This gold-niello trademark of the ancient firm, established 1489, enjoyed a merited reputation and was imprinted not only on the sterns of naval vessels. History had placed its certifying stamp upon many an event and occurrence, whose qualities were recommended to Europe and posterity.

The might of the Russian Empire and the brief formula of its power: "Orthodoxy, Autocracy, and Nationality". Fervent patriotism and the idea of Country reared in the hothouses of manorial estates and transplanted to the fertile soil of directors' offices in the young factories. The idea of civilisation and culture thrusting up like a dank weed into the glass sky of bank and bourse hall from the rich chernozem of a fourteen-hour workday. The undividedness and unity of the hundred and eighty-six member-nations of the Empire dying rapturously in the fiery crucibles of the Patriotic, Crimean and Japanese wars. Tens of thousands of miles of glinting rails imprinted upon the lazy spine of the Scythian and Slav steppes like the weal of a whip impelling to beneficent and civilised labour. The only army in the world capable of marching barefoot through Europe to Italy and through Asia to Peking and winning victories with bare fists. The majestic simplicity of the Orthodox Church defending the message of Christ from the mercantile instincts of the Jesuits and the corruptive latitudinarianism of the Lutherans. Slavdom's dominant-nation historic path from Kiev to Byzantium, Oleg's shield on the Dardanelles forts. Symbol of the nation's confidence—banknotes having the power of gold. Monuments, monuments and monuments—of great tsars, of brilliant generals, of incontestable victories and humane reforms. The handkerchief of the Gendarme Chief wiping the tears of widows and orphans. All these bear the indelible round stamp of the solid trademark in gold niello certifying "Made in the Empire".

It was to be found on peasant bellies swollen through an endless rotation of famine and crop failures; on the backs of Russia's workmen, bent under the weight of gruelling toil; on the façades of jails and penitentiaries housing 185,459 people who had broken the sacred law of private property or attempted to destroy it by means of revolution; on the countless graves of nineteen five, where it stands engraved by the fire of punitive detachments—"Made in the Empire".

The eagle was now doubly hateful to Tulmankov. First, as the object of a humiliating, needless task. Secondly, as the accursed symbol of tsarist power, as a sign-manual of violence made familiar by the police badges, as a hallmark of the many things he had come to hate since a child: the licensed grogshops, where the eagle looked down from the green signboard, coldly surveying the tragedy of men drinking their last kopeks away; the rural administration office which devoured the money rescued from father's drinking-bouts; the police station; the Admiral's epaulets; the factory office; the naval barracks which had first introduced him to the service.

But the eagle overhead, smeared with polish as if with thick green snivel, was anything but impressive, and this gave Tulmankov a malicious satisfaction.

"Dirty bastard," he said aloud; apart from the sentry at the flagstaff high overhead, no one could hear him. "Dirty old hen. Hankering for war, eh? We'll clip your bloody wings for you!"

The eagle gazed at him with blind bulging eyes. St. George, blazoned on the bird's breast, galloped to new victories on his slender-legged steed across a field of dirty-green smudges.

Tulmankov's anger burned up anew. He stood up in the swaying cradle and with the flat of his hand traced a four-letter word right across the film of polish, from wing to wing. It lay on the bird like the marks left by a smack in the face.

"Dry with that on, you bitch!" he said with satisfaction as he started rubbing viciously at the bird's feet and talons. The rag turned black at once, as if stained with blood.

The obscene word stuck to the eagle like a new heraldic detail. Heraldry, that noble science of armorial bearings, recommends that a brief motto be emblazoned upon them expressing the inner meaning of the given device. Throughout the four odd centuries of painstaking labours heraldic invention failed to devise so expressive and exhaustive a motto. It conveyed the sheer hopeless vanity of that vainglorious bird with ineffable virulence and brevity.

From below came the busy "chug, chug" of a steam launch as she swung round on a hissing wave. Tulmankov looked down through

the crook of his elbow. Lieutenant Greve was standing in the boat, nervously stroking his black toothbrush moustache—the yard had contrived to send down torpedoes without the warheads.

“These bloody officers are the limit . . . arsing about from staff to staff,” Tulmankov thought with a grin as he carefully cleaned one of the four seas which the eagle was clutching in its talons. “This is no parade for you. . . . Fire-eaters!”

Naval officers, after years of service, acquire a habit of casting a searching glance over a ship before boarding or leaving her to make sure that no loose ends are hanging over the sides, that the sentry at the flagstaff is not lounging at his post, or that the ensign itself is not wrapped round the flagstaff. That is why Greve, worried though he was like everybody else, looked up at the ship—and the first thing he saw was that obscene word staring at him in brassy nakedness through the layer of dirty polish covering the wings and breast of the eagle. Greve could not believe his eyes. He turned his head as the stern with the befouled eagle floated past, then he glanced at the forepeak man. The latter had involuntarily followed the lieutenant’s glance and had now lowered his head. Greve caught a startled look on his face. The look told him that he had not been dreaming.

“Gangway!” he commanded.

The coxswain showed no surprise, although the launch had only just shoved off. He turned the wheel, thinking, probably the lieutenant had forgotten something. These days everyone was mooning around as if in a dream, bumping into each other, with the boat scurrying backwards and forwards day and night. The white-scrubbed side boards of the port ladder approached the bow again, and the boat-hook man leaned forward, making ready to hook the manrope. The lieutenant sprang onto the lower platform of the ladder before the boat had stopped and swiftly ran up on to the deck. The mechanic, after the manner of all ship’s boat’s mechanics, stuck his head out of the engine-room hatch to see where he had arrived. At the sight of the familiar companion way and the lieutenant’s legs climbing up it, he swore.

“We’ve arrived! They don’t know where they’re going. Dashing about like mad!”

The coxswain laughed.

“The lieutenant’s mad all right. Somebody’s gone and fouled the eagle.”

“What?”

The coxswain leaned over the wheel and repeated, with appropriate intonation, the inscription on the eagle. The obscene word,

thus intoned, acquired a profound and ominous meaning which the mechanic grasped without difficulty. At first he laughed, as any sailor would, at the spicy word, but when the significance of it on that day of all days, so pregnant with the menace of war, dawned on him, he winked knowingly at the coxswain and made a vigorous gesture with his two hands that was no less suggestive.

"I see. That means—go and stick your bloomin' eagle and your bloomin' war up your bloomin' arse! Pretty nifty!"

Lieutenant Buturlin was Officer of the Day. He met Greve at the top of the ladder with a grin.

"Forgotten your umbrella, Greve?"

Greve waved him aside. He was in no mood for joking.

"Who's cleaning the eagle there on the stern?"

Buturlin raised his eyebrows.

"Haven't got the faintest idea," he said languidly. "I hung out the cradle but I don't know who's in it. 'There are far too many maids in the world for me to know them all.'"

"Where's the Commander? D'you know what the chap there's done to that eagle, the son-of-a-gun?"

"What?" Buturlin asked with but little show of interest.

Greve told him. Buturlin gasped and became excited.

"The scoundrel! Quartermaster! And we're expecting the Admiral, just imagine. . . . Quartermaster! Messenger!"

Without waiting for Buturlin to act (his action promised to be vigorous), Greve hastened for'ard, dodging the rolling projectiles and the black-faced sailors who ran past carrying coal baskets. You can always locate a Commander in a ship,—first by making enquiries, then by tracking his shouts to their source. Shiyanov was standing next to the shell barge, his head thrown back, swearing at the phlegmatic crane-man, who was looking down at him, his head stuck out of his glass cage; the crane was chaffing the ship's side, scraping the paintwork. Greve called the Commander aside. On hearing his report, Shiyanov's face turned livid.

"Twenty days' cells for the scoundrel! Messenger! Send the Watch Officer to me! The bunch of swine!"

Greve regarded him with a grave air.

"Let's go down to your cabin. This is more serious than you think."

"We can go into that afterwards," Shiyanov said with a grimace of displeasure. "We'll lock up the bastard first on bread and water. Boatswain! Don't stand there gaping! The fenders! Where are your fenders?" his voice rose to a wail and he darted to the side again.

"In that case, sir, allow me to report to the Captain," Greve said, assuming an official tone. "The matter is very urgent."

Shiyanov swung round and stared at him with the harrassed eyes of a ship's commander in the throes of coaling operations.

Greve stood waiting, cool and imperturbable. He knew that during a rush job like this the Commander could be jolted out of his excitable condition only by a contrasted show of coolness. Shiyanov, like most commanders, liked to pose as an extremely busy man who was being torn to pieces, and even stressed the need for doing everything himself by bursting in like a tornado on any work that happened to be in progress. A flicker of contempt gleamed in Greve's eye as he watched that distraught officer. The latter must have caught the look, immersed though he was in his self-imposed activity, for he glanced regretfully at the crane-man and the boatswains who had gathered around, then, with the air of a man bowing to the inevitable, he answered, throwing a jaded note into his voice:

"Ah, well, come along."

To the grating accompaniment of the crane with its swinging load of parti-coloured shells protruding from the slings; to the rollicking music of the band pouring good cheer into the coal-clogged ears of the sailors; to the rumble of the coal being poured down the bunker scuttle, the officers crossed to the hatchway and descended to the Commander's quiet and spacious cabin. There, Greve broke the silence, fixing his cool limpid gaze on the bridge of Shiyanov's nose.

From the mast the harbour looked surprisingly quiet and peaceful. The sea seemed as airy and placid as the smooth evening sky. Islets lay on it under a dark canopy of pine trees; the summer cottages gleamed white and toylike. The yellow sunset was fading and there where the sky deepened to ultramarine a lone star shone with a greenish light. Lieutenant Livitin smiled and congratulated himself on still having preserved a feeling for the lyrical.

He sat astride a log lashed to the jutting rods of the mast specially left for that purpose. Huge round blocks hung from the log like chopped-off heads, the tackles dangling from them loosely. This was Livitin's first triumph—the plating had already been raised. It closed over the stump of the Eiffel Tower like a neat round lid; on its smooth surface, which had been painted with red lead, there now stood a forge, and in that forge, tickling Livitin's nostrils with its hot pungent smoke, the charcoal was burning up and heating the rivets. This was his second triumph.

Volkovoi and Tulmankov were not needed. Electrician Kostrushkin, till that day an unremarkable man, had saved the situation. He stood at the forge, showing two sailors how to grip the red-hot rivets with the long tongs. The pneumatic hammer lay at his feet like an obedient dog, wriggling its long hose every now and then as a sign of submission. Kostrushkin turned out to be a riveter, and Livitin was able to dispense with the services of the engine-room Varangians.

Kostrushkin took the hammer in both hands and it came to life with the rhythmic chatter of a machine-gun, flattening out rivet after rivet. They darkened as they cooled, changing shape and colour under the hail of blows. Kostrushkin bent over them, grave and agitated, and Livitin suddenly remembered how nervous the man was when it came to handling the turret firing switch. It showed—one more surprise on this day of surprises!—the man's liking for one tool and his dislike of another. But that was only natural. Livitin imagined himself suddenly being torn away from his artillery and his ship and packed off for four or five years to some godforsaken Astrakhan steppe to mine salt instead of engaging in fire-control. These men, too, torn away from their customary occupations and made to tend machines of war they took little interest in, probably felt the same way about it.

Livitin watched Kostrushkin's swift deft movements, thinking of that incomprehensible enigma, the bluejacket. For the second time that day this familiar creature, part and parcel of the ship, the gun, and the service, had come under the X-rays of impending war, and the dim screen of conjecture had thrown back in blurred and flowing shapes new unexpected visions. Kozlov, who was so good at choosing roses and who knew the French names of wines and perfumes, had turned out to be a peasant *pur sang*, with the raw recruit's nostalgia for village and farm. Kostrushkin, a bungling electrician and lubberly seaman, handled this tricky pneumatic tool easier than he did his turret switches. Logically, every one of the hundred and twenty-four men in his company could be credited with similar hidden gifts. And who could be sure that among all these similar men there was not a bootmaker, the best craftsman in a whole province, or a gem polisher, and not just any gems, but diamonds, and rose-cut diamonds at that? Every year half a million men threw up their normal occupations to don the grey or blue under the command of army and naval masters who moulded them into a homogeneous mass without a past. But they did have a past. It had peeped out at him twice that day from the familiar features of his servant and the electrician. What other reactions would the corroding acid of war disclose?

Through the hole left in the plating for the new mast a sailor's head appeared.

"Anyone seen Lieutenant Livitin, mates? Commander wants him."

"He's up there," Kostrushkin answered carelessly. Livitin smiled. The man must be deeply immersed in his work to forget his usual deferential bearing, Livitin thought. Clearly, the job was in safe hands.

"Where's the Commander?" he asked, lowering his long legs and groping for a footing with his toe. A hand carefully took the heel of his shoe as if it were a porcelain cup and set his foot on the remnants of one of the hoops which had held the rods together. The messenger tried to put his hand to his cap, but the hole through which he peeped like a jack-in-the-box was too small, and so he made up for it by raising his voice to an unnaturally loud pitch.

"In his cabin, sir. Wants to see you, sir."

"I'm coming," Livitin said, stopping in front of Kostrushkin.

"Well, how goes it? Think we'll manage without the big specialists?"

"You bet, sir," Kostrushkin said cheerily. "Leave that cold rivet alone, grabby," he interrupted himself. "Didn't I tell you it's got to be red-hot? Work the bellows, man, don't be afraid!"

Livitin descended the iron ladder inside the mast, smiling, and made his way swiftly to the hatchway.

He found a frowning, worried-looking Shiyarov.

"Sit down, Livitin. Who's this Tulmankov?"

"He's the man you sent to clean the eagle," Livitin said, drawing back the armchair and taking out his cigarette case. The conversation promised to be informal. "Mind if I smoke, Commander?"

"Go ahead. . . ." Livitin noticed that he was rolling an invisible pellet between his thumb and middle finger. Shiyarov, apparently, was in serious difficulty. "What sort of a man is he?"

Livitin looked at him and Lieutenant Greve blankly. The latter sat in a calm expectant attitude.

"He's a gunner. Number Two gunlayer of port gun in Number Four Turret."

"I mean—his character, conduct?"

Livitin shrugged.

"Not very smart. . . . Dour, nervous sailor. Never seen him drunk."

"That's not what I mean, Livitin," Shiyarov interrupted. "What's his past?"

His past! Another past rose before Livitin, as if in answer to his recent musings up in the mast.

"I don't know, really," he said, spreading his hands. "If you don't mind I'll send for the Chief Petty Officer."

Shiyanov made a wry face and his fingers worked faster.

"I thought you would know the men in your own company, Livitin. What are his political views? Do you consider him trustworthy?"

Livitin got angry.

"I can give your exact information, sir, as to the virtues and failings of Tulmankov as seaman and gunner. But I don't think it part of a company commander's duties to keep a policeman's eye on his men," he said sharply.

Shiyanov's cheek twitched.

"Don't make things worse. That Tulmankov of yours has been up to mischief, and I want to know whether there's more behind this than mere impudence. Tell him what he's been up to, Greve."

Greve complied.

Livitin raised his eyebrows.

"Hm. Who'd have thought it," he murmured. "Tulmankov's a quiet fellow as a rule. Something must have got the man's rag out. I told you he was nervy and quick-tempered. Probably he was provoked to this protest by your punishment."

Shiyanov smiled derisively.

"What is your Tulmankov—a sailor or a sissy? 'Nervy, quick-tempered, protest...' What's this—a man-of-war or a girls' school?" he suddenly shouted out, glaring at Livitin round-eyed. "You realise that this obscene inscription was done on the eagle, not on a wall?"

"I think he would have done it on a samovar if you'd sent him to clean it," Livitin insisted. "It's an act of hooliganism, I admit. But I would have you know that Tulmankov worked on the mast willingly, heart and soul, and this is just a case of injured vanity. He knew only too well that he and Volkovoi were men of the day, both had got the better of the engineers—just think of it, they had tackled the mast successfully, mere gunlayers. And suddenly, on the last night, you rob him of his well-earned triumph. Naturally, the man got sore—and there's the result."

Shiyanov regarded him mockingly.

"Subtle psychology, I must say! Quite in the vein of a Chekhov novel! It's much more serious than you think," he said portentously, repeating Greve's words. "The idea of a 'policeman's eye', as you call it, put your back up, but do you know that this is the work of an organisation?"—again he shouted this out. "It's agitation! Sedition! And you, Tulmankov's immediate chief, don't see what's going on under your very nose. You try to explain it away by

psychology. It's revolution, not psychology! Be good enough to give me an exact account of that scoundrel! Who is he? A workman? From what factory? Who is he friendly with in the company? Is he religious? Who does he correspond with? What about? What relations has he?"

Livitin had stood up when Shiyanov started shouting, but controlled himself. When the hail of questions was over, he picked up his cap and said in an official tone:

"Sub-Lieutenant Gudkov will give you that information, sir. I'll tell him to go into it right away. And now, please allow me to go on with my work at the mast. We're expecting war, sir, and I think the mast just now is a bit more important than investigation proceedings. If I'm wrong perhaps you will correct me."

"All right," Shiyanov snapped, then immediately changed his tone as the import of Livitin's words sank in. "Ah, the mast? Yes, of course. Hurry up and get it finished. How's the plating?"

"I'll be finished by midnight."

"Good. The Admiral keeps reminding us about it. Mobilisation may be announced tonight, and tomorrow we'll put to sea. The devil take that Tulmankov of yours. And at a time like this!" There was a note of sincere annoyance in his voice.

Livitin went out and Shiyanov immediately reached for the telephone.

"Send the Chief Boatswain to me, at the double!" he shouted into the receiver, and hung up, thoughtfully rubbing the tip of his nose. Greve looked up at him with a steady expectant gaze.

"Ah, yes!" Shiyanov said. "A pretty kettle of fish.... So you think there's an organisation behind it?"

"I'm surc of it," Greve said quietly. "I don't presume to advise you, but I'd carry out a search if I were you."

Shiyanov looked up, startled.

"A search is essential," Greve persisted. "Lieutenant Livitin does not seem to be interested in his men's political physiognomy, but it's a thing we've got to find out."

Shiyanov toyed with his cigarette case while he digested this.

"No," he said at last. "A search is out of the question. The devil knows where it would lead us to. And the disgrace—a search in a battleship on the very eve of war! The crew will take it badly. First that row over some dirty trousers, and now this search on top of it! Imagine all the talk and gossip. The whole fleet will point their fingers at us. No, Greve, that won't do."

"Let's hear what Gudkov has to say," Greve smiled sardonically. "That's him knocking."

But it was Kornei, the Chief Boatswain. Shiyanov shook a fist at him when he came in.

"See this, Mister Bos'n? Your underlings are going to get a taste of it if that mast is not up by dinnertime tomorrow. Tell them that!"

"Don't you worry, sir," Kornei said reassuringly. "Everything'll be okay. As soon as Mr. Livitin is through we'll snap into it. I'd advise a soft word in the ear, though, to some of the dockyard officers. so's to get the rigging down tonight. We'll do our part of the job all right."

"You'd better," Shiyanov said, lowering his fist. "But who can I send? Everybody's engaged."

"What about Sub-Lieutenant Gudkov—he's not on the coaling job."

Shiyanov's face lit up, but glancing at Greve, it darkened again and he shouted peevishly:

"I'll ask your advice when I need it! Lieutenant Vetkin will go. Tell him, will you. And he's not to come back without the rigging!"

The Chief Boatswain went out, and immediately afterwards Sub-Lieutenant Gudkov appeared in the doorway, looking grave and preoccupied.

"Well?" Shiyanov threw out.

Gudkov bent his immaculate head and rapidly reported his information on Tulmankov almost without lisping (his lisp was not so much an inborn imperfection as an affectation). It transpired that Tulmankov, before joining the Navy, had worked at the Baltic Shipbuilding Yard; education—four classes municipal school; found to be a reader of objectionable literature. In March (Gudkov consulted his notes), in March, he was found to be in possession of a Znaniye volume of short stories containing Kuprin's *The Duel*, which was confiscated. Unmarried, but carries on a lively correspondence; his letters are discreetly worded but contain suspicious hints between the lines; his principal correspondents are a Mrs. N. I. Poluyarova in St. Petersburg and a reservist seaman by the name of Eidemiller.

"Addresses?" Greve interrupted, slowly drawing out his pocket diary. Gudkov consulted his notes and read them out.

"Go on."

"It's odd that these two are the only ones of his correspondents who do not address their letters to the ship," Gudkov said, obviously demonstrating what an astute mind he had. "His letters to them often refer to their replies, but none of those replies come here; obviously they send them to some shore address. I couldn't have missed them,

because I go through all the company's correspondence very carefully."

As a matter of fact Gudkov did go through all the company's correspondence very thoroughly. This duty of second in command of the company he discharged with eager zest. In this dreary turbid stream of rural salutations one sometimes came across piquant details, naive declarations of love, jealous reproaches and intimate messages which delighted Gudkov by their simple and rich vernacular. It was because of their complete lack of an amorous theme that Tulmankov's letters to the mysterious Poluyarova roused Gudkov's suspicions.

When Gudkov had finished his detailed report on Tulmankov, Lieutenant Greve glanced at Shiyarov.

"Doesn't that convince you?"

"Yes, the man's unreliable, I'm afraid," Shiyarov muttered. "Still, a search at this time—damn it—such a scandal! Anyway, I'll report to the Captain . . . it is a nasty affair. . . ."

He went up to the mirror and straightened his tunic, then picked up his cap and went out. Sub-Lieutenant Gudkov glanced curiously at Greve and asked eagerly:

"What's the matter? I've had an eye on this Tulmankov for some time."

Greve repeated the story of the eagle. Gudkov livened up as though he had predicted all this beforehand.

"That's just in his style! Remember that time the stokers mutinied? Tulmankov had a hand in that, let me tell you. The cunning devil! But you can't pin him down. I told Livitin that time—better have him drafted out to naval barracks, but you know how obstinate he is: 'He's a good gunner, and you're making mountains out of molehills, Gudkov.' He didn't believe me—now here you are!"

Greve smiled ironically.

"Livitin likes to act your white man. Flaunts his liberalism and wears kid gloves. Nature's nobleman! When these Tulmankovs start chucking him overboard he'll come to his senses, but it'll be too late then. . . . What men in the company is Tulmankov friendly with?"

"That's very difficult to say," Gudkov answered, entering again with zest into the role of experienced detective, and significantly raising his colourless eyebrows. "Very difficult. He's a secretive beggar, unsociable type."

"Well, Gudkov, you'll carry out the search yourself," Greve said. His tone implied that in this matter the Commander need not be consulted. Gudkov drew himself up.

"Try to do it quietly, and the less witnesses you have the better. Get some warrant officer to help you—Ovseyets, let's say. Then report to the Commander and take—I mean, he'll probably order you to take Tulmankov down to the Governor-General's office. There you will find Captain von Lüde and will tell him what sort of bird this is. Take with you all the letters you may find—may be some notebook, or literature, everything you find. You'll hand in a written report afterwards."

"No doubt there'll be a charge of lese-majesty," Sub-Lieutenant Gudkov said importantly. He found the whole thing extremely interesting and flattering. He suspected that Livitin regarded him as a fool and a popinjay, but he had a surprise coming. It would be the second time that he, a young sub-lieutenant, had been entrusted with a most important task. He recollected how quietly and efficiently he had handled the arrest of the stokers in the spring, and the thought gave dignity to his tone: "Don't you worry, sir, I'll see to it."

He lit a cigarette, leaned back in his chair, and gazed at Greve with adoration. Greve was his ideal of a naval officer: elegant, cool, witty, and resourceful.

Tulmankov was already under arrest. His cell was an iron cupboard, just large enough to hold a cot, and its fourth wall consisted of iron bars running from top to bottom. The cells gave on a narrow passageway facing the after capstan-room, which was used as a guardhouse, so that the Officer of the Guard could keep a constant eye on the inmates, who were displayed like goods in a shopwindow.

The cells, contrary to custom, were empty. In view of the mass of loading work to be done Shiyarov had ordered the prisoners to be detailed for duties. Only one cell—the one nearest the doors—was occupied. Behind its bars, on an iron chair, sat Tulmankov. He sat erect, a defiant smile on his gaunt face, long arms dangling and one leg swinging carelessly. Now and again, through the bars, he met the glance of one of the guards, and then he would smile still more defiantly and raise an eyebrow. He liked to think that all the guards knew of his writing on the face of the double-headed eagle, that the word had spread like wildfire throughout the ship, from stern to coal-bunkers, evoking fear, admiration and glee, and putting new ideas into some men's heads.

But such men as he could see from his cage regarded his presence there with chilling indifference. Volkovoi alone, returning from some errand on deck, glanced at him darkly, but immediately turned away and dropped his eyes to the guardroom regulations, which was the only reading matter permitted in the guardhouse. Tulmankov's

sneering expression became still more defiant—he was obviously trying to fight down the fear that was creeping into his heart.

It was the fear of uncertainty. His arrest had been carried out too swiftly and noiselessly for him to regard it as the end of the eagle incident—it was rather the beginning. What a fool he had been to smear that word on the eagle! Of all the crazy ideas! Was it only so's Lieutenant Greve should see it? The futility of the gesture was brought home to him with growing clarity. Volkovoi's behaviour told him that the mere fact of his arrest could not be used to spark off a mutiny. If Volkovoi had quashed his proposals to put up a fight in the spring, during the stoker incident, all the more hopeless was it to expect any action now, when none of the crew knew what he had been arrested for. And again, as then, a feeling of harsh resentment against Volkovoi swept over him.

“Organised action!” he thought savagely, looking at Volkovoi's broad motionless back. “We'll damn well peg out, waiting for this blasted organisation! We should snatch at every opportunity. Instead, we're just dawdling. Tactics, they call it! Just sheer cowardice!”

Now that Tulmankov's own freedom was at stake, this long-standing dispute about tactics and the timing of the uprising became sharper than ever and Tulmankov's antagonism towards Volkovoi turned to suspicious hatred. Tulmankov looked again at Volkovoi's rigid back, and his thoughts careened as if in a dream, spinning blurred fantastic pictures that distorted reality and refused to accept it. He saw the eagle incident now as an act of conscious heroism, an attempt to rouse the sailors by a sublime gesture, like that of the terrorist who throws a bomb at a minister and takes his own life in doing so. Self-pity caught him by the throat. Self-pity and suppressed terror bred wild plans, each more fantastic than the other, and hot words sprang soundlessly to his lips in a passionate appeal calling to insurrection, battle, victory or death.

A stir outside his cell caught his attention (every movement among the men there seemed to have a direct bearing on his own fate) and sanity came back to him with a rush. The wild stampeding thoughts faded out of his mind like dream visions, which, until sudden awakening, had seemed so clear, so inexorably logical and real. The fantastic plans and vivid persuasive words vanished in the cold light of reality glimpsed through the bars.

He could not see the whole capstan-room from his cell, and when Sub-Lieutenant Gudkov came down and called the Officer of the Guard aside, both men were out of sight. Not so Volkovoi, of whom he had a good view; from the frequency with which he was turning

over the pages and the strained expression of his face, Tulmankov gathered that he was trying to catch the officers' conversation. Then Volkovoi quickly looked up at him from under his tufted brows, and Tulmankov answered it with a glance that read: "What's up there?" But Volkovoi lowered his eyes quickly and a frown puckered his brow again as he tried to piece together the snatches of speech that reached him.

Then Sub-Lieutenant Kuntsevich, the Officer of the Guard, came into his line of vision. He was bending over the duty roster, running his finger down the columns until it came to the name of the Duty Petty Officer. He looked up and commanded:

"Khlebnikov! Lead out the prisoner! Take him to the mess, shift him into blacks. Further orders from Sub-Lieutenant Gudkov. Take Volkovoi as escort; he'll be back before you are relieved."

Escort? Tulmankov sprang to his feet. Events had to be rushed. Escort? He was to be taken off the ship? Where to?

Khlebnikov unlocked the grilled door. Volkovoi took his rifle and stood at attention till Tulmankov had passed. The latter saw familiar crumpled envelopes and a folded newspaper sheet in the hands of Sub-Lieutenant Gudkov. His heart began hammering wildly at the sight and his fists clenched hard in impotent rage. All was clear now.

Eidemiller's letters and a copy of the illegal newspaper *Za Narod* (*For the People*) Tulmankov had kept in a special hiding place—a pocket artfully sewn inside his kitty-bag safe from the prying eye of the officers during daily inspections. In the hands of Gudkov they meant that his dunnage had been thoroughly ransacked. Events were coming to a head and the order for him to be shifted into shore rig revealed its sinister meaning—the Okhranka, Russia's secret political police.

He looked round with fear-stunned hunted eyes. The sailors of the guard sat and stood about in habitual listless attitudes, unaware of the damning and frightful significance of the letters and newspaper which the sub-lieutenant was nervously tapping in his hand. None of them understood this, except perhaps Volkovoi, who had often read Eidemiller's letters and the newspaper. But he doggedly avoided Tulmankov's eyes, obviously afraid to give himself away.

Suddenly Tulmankov felt sick at heart. He had his first stab of panic. He felt like howling, screaming, throwing himself on Gudkov or tearing the rifle out of Khlebnikov's hands and shooting Gudkov with it, then Kuntsevich. He must do something immediately, while he was still here, among sailors instead of gendarmes, while there was still a spark of hope that they would support him. . . . Volkovoi

would be first to support him. Then some of the guards—two or three of them at least—these would be enough! The others would not fire at their own comrades. Then he would rush out onto the deck, firing at the officers and calling the men to mutiny. . . . Tulmankov looked round wild-eyed, and Khlebnikov immediately stepped close up to him.

“Now then, no monkey-tricks!” he said in a startled tone. “Let me tie his hands, sir—look at his fists!”

All eyes went to Tulmankov’s hands. His fists were clenched so hard that big blue veins stood out on them. Volkovoi also stepped close up to him and pushed him forward.

“Go on . . . you . . .” he muttered savagely, and there was condemnation in the sound of his voice. It dawned on Tulmankov that Volkovoi would not stand by him either if he attacked the officers. His lips twisted in a bitter smile, and he was about to say something, but Volkovoi pushed him roughly towards the ladder. Sub-Lieutenant Gudkov stepped aside to let them pass, and thus—Khlebnikov in front and Volkovoi in the rear—they mounted the ladder in single file.

Mess 18 was empty. All the men were at work—some on the mast, others taking in ammunition. Tulmankov’s locker showed signs of having been ransacked with thoroughgoing relentlessness, and when Tulmankov, almost blinded by the mist that blurred his sight, fumbled in his kitty-bag for a clean jumper, his fingers felt the pocket, which had been ripped open. Cunning devil, that sub! Nose like a gendarme! Tulmankov stood up and met the heavy-lidded eyes of Volkovoi, who was close at his side. Khlebnikov stood a little way off, rummaging in Tulmankov’s sea chest, where he kept his black trousers. Tulmankov took this opportunity to give whispered vent to his pent-up feelings.

“Ratting, Volkovoi, eh? Like last spring, with the stokers. Ta-actics!”

Volkovoi glared at him with open hatred in his sullen little eyes.

“Shut up,” he whispered with lips that barely stirred. “Anarchist swine! We have you to thank for this search. Ruining the whole organisation, blast you! At least don’t blab at the Okhranka.”

Khlebnikov flung the trousers at Tulmankov; they fell on his shoulder.

“Get into your shore-togs, and make it snappy—you’re not going to a wedding!”

And again—with Khlebnikov in front and Volkovoi behind—they came out on the upper deck. The bugler had just sounded “stand

easy", and the panting men sat down where the signal had found them—on coal baskets, on cradles lowered into the barges, on the heaped up coal—enjoying a hasty smoke during the five-minute break in the work. They had no idea where Tulmankov was being hustled to with fixed bayonets and why, and they followed him with incurious glances. He was seized with despair—despair, and self-pity at the clear realisation that never again would he see these men, the sailors of the *Generalissimo*, for whose sake he was now going to the Okhranka, and thence to prison or the chain-gang; the comrades for whom he had fought for four years and with whom he was to have hoisted the red flag in place of the St. Andrew's ensign. . . . Sailors! Men who had once shown themselves capable of seizing the *Potyomkin*, who had shown they could die on the *Ochakov*, men of Sveaborg and *Memory of Azov*. What were they doing there, sitting on the coal, exhausted by the gruelling toil, sitting on the deck of a doomed ship destined by the Tsar to meet a speedy death in a senseless war—sitting silent instead of acting the way they had shown they could act in nineteen five? Wild thoughts blazed through his brain along the old tracks left by the recent swarm of fantastic plans conceived in the cells, and Tulmankov lost his head completely.

Suddenly, before Volkovoi could stop him, he darted aside and sprang onto the huge flat cowl of the ventilator. He tore off his cap, his face livid and ghastly, and shouted in a hoarse voice:

"Comrades! Sailors! We've stood enough of these tsarist hounds—our officers! Comrades, remember what we have taught you, get your rifles, seize the power. . . ."

"Silence!" Khlebnikov whimpered, clicking the bolt of his rifle. "Get down or I'll shoot!"

"What are you sitting there? What are you waiting for?" Tulmankov shouted. "To arms! Down with the officers! Comrades of the fighting organisation, why don't you rally the men!" he almost wept, looking round at the sailors with eyes of anguish born of despair. The sudden sharp blow of a rifle butt below the knees knocked him down. As he fell on the deck he saw the distorted face of Volkovoi, who threw himself upon him.

"I'll shoot you myself," the latter hissed into his ear as he pinioned his arms behind him. "Trying to give the show away, blast you?"

The petty officers came running towards the ventilator, their scowling faces grimy with coal dust. Khlebnikov dropped his rifle and clamped his hand over Tulmankov's twisted mouth with clumsy ferocity. Shiyonov's white tunic could be seen swiftly approaching

as he threaded his way among the black figures of the sailors. The men's eyes were turned away. It was all so sudden, unexpected and incredible that no one caught the drift of Tulmankov's appeal.

"Bugler! Sound the carry on!" Shiyanov cried as he ran up, and the bugler, standing by the barge, put the bugle to his lips. The sharp signal got all the men up, and the travelling belt of coal baskets resumed its progress amid dark clouds of dust. The petty officers sheered off, and when the ventilator, hidden behind their backs, came into view again, there was no sign of Tulmankov.

Pinioned and gagged, feet foremost like a corpse, he was borne down the deserted passageways and decks in the arms of four strapping petty officers to where a picket boat with Sub-Lieutenant Gudkov in it was waiting for him at the gangway.

Coaling continued.

CHAPTER 12

The picket-boat started out for the ship just before eleven o'clock when the guard was due to be relieved. The dark warm July night was disquieting; red and green side lights twinkled all over the harbour; occasionally twin white lights shone above them, indicating that a barge was in tow. The beams of the fort searchlights swept the sea, lighting up cranes, barges, the heeling water carrier creeping towards the ship, or scurrying ship-to-shore boats. Amid all these twinkling, disturbing illuminations the *Generalissimo*, with the forge on her dismantled mainmast, loomed like a glowing beacon, and the picket-boat, on leaving South Harbour, bore straight down upon her.

As soon as the boat shoved off Sub-Lieutenant Gudkov invited the two men—both Khlebnikov and Volkovoi—into the stern cabin and even allowed them to sit down. He was in high spirits; he joked and treated them to cigarettes, and little resembled the man who had recently sat there with a pistol in his hand facing the handcuffed Tulmankov. Volkovoi was silent. Gudkov's jokes were as palatable as the cigarettes he offered. Obviously, this officer went out of his way to impress upon them the fact that Tulmankov the mutineer was one thing, and they quite another—loyal faithful blue-jackets. He even promised to recommend Volkovoi for a reward for the resourcefulness he had shown in stopping Tulmankov's seditious outcries. At the word "reward" Khlebnikov chuckled and there and then began to fawn on Volkovoi. The latter smiled to himself, thinking "so far so good".

In lieu of Tulmankov the picket-boat brought back (in Khlebnikov's cartridge pouch to avoid it getting crumpled in his pocket) a receipt acknowledging delivery of the accused at the office of the Governor-General, where he was probably now undergoing his first interrogation.

The dark water streamed away from the boat's sides. Volkovoi dipped his hand into the warm flow and dabbed his forehead and his neck. The first interrogation. . . . Only the other day, while working at the sight-lighting in the deserted turret, he had been talking with Tulmankov about the first interrogation (it had to come some day) and the answers they were to give. Tulmankov had said: "Answers be damned! I'll just keep my mouth shut and spit in their faces. Let 'em beat me, I'll grow a new skin."

He pictured to himself Tulmankov's pale desperate face, and could see him ripping his shirt open at the throat and shouting hoarsely: "Come on, hit me, damn you! Hit a sailor!" Volkovoi twitched his shoulders, as though the gendarmes—those burly, mustachioed, impassive men who had led Tulmankov away—had hit him instead of Tulmankov. A chill ran up his spine again, as it had at the office, when Captain von Lüste, answering Gudkov's telephone call, had come in and run his eye over the sailors like a doctor starting his examination of a patient. The Captain trimmed his nails with a pocket file as he listened in silence to Gudkov's brief report, and glanced now and again at Tulmankov. Then he invited Gudkov into his room for a more detailed talk.

During their long wait in the outer office, Volkovoi was not given a chance to have a word with Tulmankov, what with Khlebnikov at their side and the gendarme at the door. Tulmankov stood motionless, and only the pulsing vein on his neck revealed how wildly his heart was hammering. Once or twice he looked up with eyes full of hatred and gazed at the door through which the Captain had disappeared, and once he cast a similar blazing eye at Volkovoi. How was one to explain to him that it was not Volkovoi, nor the men of the *Generalissimo* who were to blame for his present plight, but those others, who, for years, had drummed into his head the idea that a revolutionary was, above all, an intrepid hero; those who sent men like Tulmankov to kill one public prosecutor in order that another, taking his place, should make him hang for it; those who taught that revolution was a struggle of individuals with individuals. He could not tell him anything of this here.

Nevertheless, seizing an opportunity when the gendarme's back was turned, Volkovoi twisted his hand round awkwardly from where

it hung down the side of his trousers, and groping for Tulmankov's fingers, he squeezed them hard. Tulmankov started. Fearing lest anyone notice the gesture, Volkovoi released his grip at once, but Tulmankov, as if answering his unuttered thought, suddenly spoke up in a loud angry voice: "What are they dawdling there! Why don't they hurry up with it—they won't get me to talk anyway!" Khlebnikov suddenly bestirred himself, and the gendarme turned round slowly and uttered a leisurely threat: "Better shut your jaw before you get it shut for you." Just then a bell rang softly and two more gendarmes appeared. Sub-Lieutenant Gudkov came out of the office, flushed and preoccupied. He turned to Khlebnikov, eyebrows raised high: "Hand over the prisoner. You'll get a signed paper for him. You'll give it to me aboard the ship"—and Tulmankov disappeared through the door, perhaps forever.

Volkovoi knew only too well what takes place behind such doors. In nineteen four he and his father, a foreman at the railway depot, were arrested by the gendarmes after a search at their house, where a bundle of revolutionary leaflets was found. First kindly, then threateningly, the older man was questioned for a long time as to where he had received the leaflets, and then he was kicked in the groin, and when he came to and repeated "I don't know", they made for him, Semyon. He braced himself for the blow. Just then came his father's half-strangled cry: "Leave the boy alone, what does he know!" That gave him a brainwave. Suddenly he raised a hideous voice and began to squall, saying that he had stolen the bundle at the depot, in the tool shop, for the sake of the paper, to make kites with, but at home he had found the paper too thin, and he had tossed the bundle into a corner and forgotten about it. And although the gendarmes had not touched him, they were always associated in his mind with the agonising suspense of an expected kick in the groin.

His hatred of them was so great that he joined the revolutionary fighting squad, although he was only sixteen and had a job getting accepted. Wherever the gendarmes were concerned he always volunteered for the riskiest tasks. He avoided being blown to pieces by a bomb in August nineteen five only because the paper bearing the fateful word "doer" was drawn out of the leather cap by the man who had stepped up to the table before him.

Since then, years, books, and people had passed through his life, spared by accident, and the revolution appeared to him in quite a new light. He came to the *Generalissimo* with secret directions from the St. Petersburg Committee of the Social-Democratic Party of Bolsheviks to contact an unknown electrician of Turret No. 4 by the

name of Fyodor Kudrin. They happened to be in the same company, the same turret, the same mess, and right through that first night Volkovoi and his new acquaintance had exchanged whispered confidences. Kudrin was quick to appreciate Volkovoi's resourcefulness and discretion—qualities cultivated in him by his underground work at the Saratov depot, which had been interrupted by his being called up to the Navy. Afterwards they became friends. Their friendship was none the less strong for being undemonstrative. And it was Fyodor Kudrin now, of all men—his pal, shipmate, “bunkie”—in naval idiom—shrewd Bolshevik and organiser—in party idiom—it was Kudrin he stood in greatest need of now to keep him from giving way to a feeling of sharp pity towards Tulmankov and committing similar follies himself.

The *Generalissimo* was already quite near. The forges on the mast had gone out, and the black hulk of the ship, outlined by the faint points of light over the barges, seemed to have settled deep in the water. The picket-boat swung round towards the gangway. The distant blue lights of Helsingfors ran past to starboard, and on the portside the long pale-blue beam of a searchlight from the destroyer guarding the outer harbour skimmed the surface of the water and darted away seawards. Guarding. Probably in the *Generalissimo*, too, they had had torpedo-attack alarm, and the guns were manned for the night.

Everywhere were evidences of the coming war, and Volkovoi all but swore aloud. That fool, acting the lone revolutionary! “Comrades of the fighting organisation, why don't you. . . .” Now go and prove to those gendarmes that you dreamt it all up. The cat was out of the bag now, worse luck! Even if they didn't get to know any names, it meant lying low for a while. What a waste of precious time! Just when the sailors—the more reliable of them—had to be told what the war was about, and what you had to do to turn it into a lever of the revolution. Kashchenko had come from shore leave the other day with a letter from St. Petersburg saying how to explain it. But try and explain things when they'll be searching the whole place for that “fighting organisation” of which the officers had had no suspicion. Now they'd be on the alert all the time. Kept those letters, too, the idiot—made a little pocket for them. He might have guessed, the prize mug, that papers make a rustling noise! That means they'll get Eidemiller too. Trying to make a revolution all on his own—of all the crazy ideas!

The eagle, which Tulmankov had defaced, looked at the approaching picket-boat with malicious satisfaction. The dim taffrail light

showed that someone had finished the cleaning job on it. The ravening beaks gleamed, ready to seize fresh prey. The boat slowed down and approached the starboard gangway.

Glancing at the clock outside the watch space Volkovoi asked leave of Khlebnikov to go to the lavatory before taking his turn of duty, and handing over his rifle to him, he ran off to the forecabin. At Turret No. 3 someone hailed him in a low voice. He peered into the shadow of the turret cast by the hanging lamp and saw Kashchenko. The deck here was deserted; the file of sailors hoisting in the coal baskets were working much farther forward; but Volkovoi was on his guard, and he too stepped into the shadow of the turret.

Usually calm and slow, Kashchenko seized his arm and began quickly: "I've been on tenterhooks.... Let's think what's to be done."

"What can we do?" Volkovoi muttered. "He's gummed up the works and got into hot water himself. The only hope is he won't sell us out."

"I don't mean that. I went ashore with the Navigating Officer, for charts."

"Oh," Volkovoi said quickly. "Did you meet her again?"

"Yes, she arrived from St. Petersburg in the morning. Gave me a letter. But I don't know what's in it. Haven't got a chance to look."

"Where is it?"

"Here," Kashchenko said, carefully laying his hand on his chest. "They're snooping about all over the mess decks, a regular search raid. They've rummaged about in Marsakov's locker, Kostrushkin's too. Greve's the chief snooper in charge. So far I'm carrying it about on me, but what am I to do with it when night comes?"

Volkovoi thought it over. A sailor had no privacy, not even at night; he had to undress in front of everybody and tumble into his hammock in his underpants and shirt. He couldn't hide anything on him. It was the same in the steering compartment and the turret—everywhere there were men about these days, everywhere petty officers, preparing the ship for combat.

"Show me," he said.

Kashchenko looked round and drew out a small packet folded to the size of a quarter of a sheet and wrapped in thick paper, which he immediately hid behind his back. Volkovoi held his hand out.

"Give it to me. It'll be safe as in a secret cupboard. Tomorrow we'll think of something."

Kashchenko became his slow and cautious old self again. Still holding the packet behind his back, he shook his head.

"You'll be in a crowd all the time. Besides, Khlebnikov's next to you. . . ."

"Hurry up, Artyom!" Volkovoi said, getting angry. "I'll be late for duty, I've got to go to the heads yet. Who will suspect me—straight back from the gendarmes department? Come on, give it to me!"

He held his hand out and Kashchenko gave him the packet. He thrust it down the neck of his jumper under his shirt, right near the heart against his bare skin, adjusted his jumper and made for the fo'c'sle at the double. On the way he ran into Lieutenant Livitin and pulled up to make way for him among the shells that cluttered the deck. The lieutenant, apparently, had just climbed down from the mast. He was grimy but pleased.

"Hullo, Volkovoi!" he hailed him. "We finished the riveting without you. What made you get yourself on guard duty? Never mind, two portions of vodka on me!"

"It is a shame, sir," Volkovoi agreed, then suddenly added: "Who's going to man the port gun, sir? The sights will have to be set first thing in the morning, but I'm on guard duty, and Tulmankov—well, you know. . . ."

The smile was chased from Livitin's face.

"I'll see to it in the morning," he interrupted, and passed on, whistling—a sure sign of vexation with him. In fact, the next moment his brusque shout reached Volkovoi's ears.

"Where are you lugging those things? Going on leave?"

Volkovoi looked round and saw someone standing at attention in front of Livitin with a ditty-box in his hand, but he had no time to stop and examine him. With only seven or eight minutes to spare, he ran to the forecastle.

The man standing before the lieutenant was Boatswain Netoporchuk. Pulled up by the sudden shout, he stood there at a loss for words, while Livitin went on:

"Haven't you got anything to do except drag your dunnage about?"

"If you please, sir, it's a wooden article," Netoporchuk found his tongue at last, and held the box up into the light that streamed from the after house.

"What are you talking about? What if it is wood?"

"I'm taking it to the barge, sir," Netoporchuk slowly explained with obvious relief. "The Commander ordered all extra wood to be dumped into the barge, sir."

Livitin looked at him with growing irritation, then suddenly exploded:

"Extra wood? Then why don't you chuck that cocoanut of yours in? Take it back, you chump!"

The order would seem to have gladdened Netoporchuk, but he continued to stand there gazing at the lieutenant, unable to make up his mind.

Ever since the crew had been told off for evening work that ditty-box had given him no peace. He was sorry to part with it after so many years together, what with the pictures on it, and the memories of his raw recruit days associated with them. There was no help for it—the thing *was* made of wood. After making a round of all the boatsman's "country"—all the stores and bag rooms—and ordering the ejection of all "extra wood", Netoporchuk had returned to his cabin and stood for a long time over his box, unable to bring himself to empty it. Finally, with a sigh, like one mourning the dead, he carefully transferred its contents to his locker and tried to detach the pictures. But they had been glued to the lid and stuck fast. The thought shot through his mind: "Maybe there's no need to chuck it out? It can't cause a fire, surely? That chair there is more likely to be a fire hazard." But the next moment he shied at the thought, catching himself reasoning when the Commander had given explicit orders about all extra wood. Netoporchuk slammed the lid down and carried the box up on deck, trying to keep his thoughts off it and to think of anything he had overlooked in the cordage rooms. And now here was Lieutenant Livitin bawling him out—a thing he had never done before—and ordering him to take it back again.

"Are you sure it's all right, sir?" Netoporchuk hazarded, and tried to explain again: "The Commander said all extra wood—"

"How many times have I got to tell you! Scram, and take that darned box with you!"

Netoporchuk obediently made for the hatchway, and Livitin followed him. Watching the man's ponderous gait, Livitin suddenly experienced a slight shock at the thought of what a man like Netoporchuk was capable of doing if ordered to. He'd cut his own head off without stopping to think about it. Good God, what people these were! The good humour in which he had come down from the mast was now marred beyond repair—first by Volkovoi's question, and then by this stupid ditty-box, symbolising, as it were, what was happening aboard the ship.

Casemate No. 16, through which he had to pass to get to the officers' passageway, met him with the blue semi-darkness of battle

lighting and the tense silence of gun crews alerted for action. Come to think of it, you had the same ditty-box situation here as well: for the third night these men had gone without sleep, vainly straining nerves and sight in expectation of an imaginary attack on the harbour, which was protected by the Sveaborg batteries, guarded at the entrance by destroyers and from the sea by cruiser patrol. A fine showing these men would make in battle after spending five or six nights like these before the war started!

In the semi-darkness, Livitin struck his ankle painfully against the sharp edge of the open magazine hatch, and cursed aloud. Shiyarov's good management, this was: the upper deck was like Nevsky Prospekt, and here it was pitchdark! Coming into the brightly lit officers' passageway, Livitin stepped over a sack of flour lying outside his door, which was next to the hatch of the dry-provision store, and entered his cabin, slamming the door behind him.

Meanwhile, Volkovoi, who managed to get back before the bell sounded, carefully shifted Kashchenko's packet to fit under the black belt of the cartridge pouch slung across his chest, where it would not stick out from under his jumper, and took up his position at that very hatch, Station 3, by the strong-box.

Ordinarily, this place was deserted and silent. The strong-box and the safe containing secret documents stood right aft, facing the door leading to the commanding officer's compartment. In the night, after first making sure that there was nobody about in either the starboard or port officers' passageways, the guard was allowed to take one step aside and turn round towards this door, which was always kept open. Through it he could see the spacious ante-room, on the white bulkhead of which, black and awesome, hung the captain's coat; beyond it, through a second door, a dimly lit saloon, and then a third door, leading to the stateroom. The saloon was quiet and deserted, like the altar section of a church. And like the holy doors to the altar which only the officiating priest and deacon could enter, so, of all the thousand two hundred men on board the ship, only two could enter that door unless sent for—Commander Shiyarov and the Captain's servant Yefrem Mamotka.

First thing in the morning Mamotka entered the sanctum with a nickel-plated shaving set, a silver coffee-pot, cut-glass bowls containing pâté, butter, and jam, a stiffly starched napkin and a glass in a heavy holder. Shortly afterwards he would carry them out again, messed up, piled in disorder on the tray amid soap lather and stains. After that Shiyarov would go through the door with neatly folded papers to make his morning report, and bring them out again mixed

up, scribbled over in red pencil, often crumpled up, and sometimes torn. Then Mamotka would pass through the door again, this time without crockery, but with an officer for whom the Captain had sent him. This officer would invariably stop outside the door first to adjust his tunic and pat his hair down before the mirror, taking no notice of either the guard or the ironical expectant attitude of Mamotka, who stood at the Captain's door with finger crooked for the fateful knock, as if asking: "Well, are you ready there?" A visit to the Captain's cabin was always an unpleasant experience, which explains why the ante-room with the mirror in it bore the expressive name "dressing-room". The officers emerged from the cabin unaccompanied by Mamotka, but approximately in the same state as the crockery or the papers—in lather and blotches, crumpled-looking and crushed.

At Post 3 each relief of the guard saw only one aspect of the mysterious life in the Captain's sanctuary. Thus, the guard of the first relief—evening and morning from seven till nine and from one till three in the day and night—had the doubtful pleasure of seeing the Captain himself at close quarters, so close that you could hear his short breath blowing into his yellow handlebar-moustache, and feel the sleeve of his tunic brushing your elbow when he passed you in the morning to attend colours, or in the daytime, when, taking advantage of relaxation hour during which the whole crew was resting in every nook and cranny of the great ship, he went out onto the empty deck to "take the air", or in the evening, when he went ashore, or, finally, at night, should he return and decide to spend it aboard the ship.

This third relief, which was now Volkovoi's, was presented with a spectacle of varied and copious foods served up in the stateroom by the indefatigable Mamotka: in the morning—coffee, at noon—lunch, at six in the afternoon—dinner, and on Mondays, when the Captain was "sitting up" for Shiyanov, who was taking a spell ashore—evening tea round about twelve o'clock.

The second relief was considered the least troublesome; it fell on the hours when the Captain was either attending to his duties or relaxing. There was no danger of the Captain passing by you, or of your appetite being irritated by the sight of the food bunkering process. All the guard saw was Shiyanov with his papers, or Mamotka acting as usher to the officers, and only by these signs could he judge of the activities of the ship's captain.

During those anxious days, however, everything was topsy-turvy. The Captain called on the Admiral at the most untimely hours and

returned as blotchy-faced as his own officers when they left his presence. The shining desert that was the two officers' passageways was now crowded with matlows, stowing flour, groats, macaroni, and sugar in the dry-provision store; even in the "dressing-room", the hatch leading to the stern armory was open and the warrant officers were lowering machine-gun cartridge-belts and 37 mm shells into it. Officers went in and out of the Captain's cabin, not only unchaperoned by Mamotka, but not even stopping before the mirror: now Buturlin with his charts rolled up into a fat tube, now the Gunnery Lieutenant with shell delivery slips, muttering the figures to himself, now Paymaster Budagov with cheques, forms or the Order Book. They passed through hurriedly, with a businesslike air, hanging their caps up disrespectfully over the Captain's coat, while Mamotka followed hot upon their heels carrying misted soda-water syphons into the saloon.

Standing at his post, Volkovoi, his thoughts elsewhere, watched all these bustling activities, which were so unusual in that sanctum. Heavy sacks rolled down the officers' ladders from the upper deck, sailors dragged them down the passageway to the dry-provision store, and every now and then the Senior Storekeeper sang out in his most resonant weather-deck voice: "Stir your stumps, God damn and blast your dirty souls!" Storozhuk and Kostrushkin came towards the "dressing-room" carrying a box of cartridge-belts. When they drew nearer, Kostrushkin met Volkovoi's eyes, but he looked away and said to Storozhuk in a casual tone:

"Seen the new rat we've got aboard?"

"The what?" the other said blankly.

"You'll see him soon," Kostrushkin said enigmatically. "We'll be congratulating him on his badges, and have a drink on the house. Mind the door there!"

They disappeared into the "dressing-room" and Volkovoi's heart sank. So that's what he was hinting at, the son-of-a-gun! Who would have thought that his clash with Tulmankov would be interpreted as base treachery? True, everyone knew that Kostrushkin was Tulmankov's bosom friend and most ardent supporter, but then a ship was like a village—just start a rumour and everyone would be repeating it. You couldn't very well go around explaining to everybody that the darned fool had to be stopped from shouting about the organisation!

Suddenly his blood rose in a jet. In its hot wave all the pity he had recently felt for Tulmankov was washed away. There was the man's seed now, Kostrushkin, walking the deck—one of those he

had always been trying to incite against the Bolsheviks in the Committee. So that's what he was up to! The idea was to scare the sailors away from Volkovoi, from Kashchenko, from all who went against his friend, that hot-gospeller of revolution.

The things he had begun to perceive in Tulmankov two years ago now rose before him clearer than ever. The worst of it was that this had now flared up, like an infectious disease, in another man, and maybe not in one man alone. It looked as if Tulmankov had been at work outside the Committee, too, hugger-muggering with men like Kostrushkin, in whom he sought support. He had been stubbornly attempting to repeat what had taken place two years ago aboard the *Tsesarevich*, where they had believed that the main thing was to rally as many men as possible, enrol into the organisation everyone who had a grudge against the wardroom or who simply expressed discontent with the order of things in the Navy. These men were invited to meetings, initiated into underground secrets and authorised to draw others into the organisation, as if this were the year nineteen five in Russia instead of the year nineteen twelve. Who, if not Tulmankov, had shouted: "You'll lose a good man like Khlebnikov. You ought to hear how he swears at the officers in the fo'c'sle! He's our man, all right!" And it was Khlebnikov who got his badges after the arrests. It had been a hard time. The setback aboard the *Tsesarevich* had shown that a mutiny in the Navy had to be organised differently, and that the April attempt had failed not because the Okhranka had nosed things out, but because the organisers themselves had made blunders.

And when, in the *Generalissimo*, they had started knocking together a new organisation out of the defeated remnants of the old, Tulmankov had stuck to his old guns. Kudrin had come with instructions from the St. Petersburg Committee to form a small, but well-concealed organisation aboard the ship, which would be capable of leading the mass of sailors to revolution as soon as the general movement within the country would call for a mutiny in the fleet. And what had Tulmankov done? He immediately started ridiculing the idea, shouting that such tactics were shameful, that they were ruining the cause, that you didn't have to wait for a revolution to happen, you had to make it, that the Bolsheviks' system of underground organisation consisting of five-man cells showed distrust of the sailors, that it prevented the mustering of strength, that the Committee was isolated from the crew and stewing in its own juice—in a word, everywhere and with everybody he talked about an immediate uprising.

Volkovoi thought of Kudrin with keen regret. Before the latter had been transferred to the reserve it had been much easier to cope with Tulmankov and his influence on the men. And then Volkovoi was left to handle the man himself, until Kashchenko, and then Marsakov, followed by the rest of the Committeemen, had got Tulmankov taped. And now it was Kostrushkin! But was he the only one?

The lean figure of the Commander appeared at the end of the officers' passageway, where no loading operations were being carried out. He was accompanied by Lieutenant Greve, who was talking to him in an earnest manner. The Commander was listening with a wry face. They stopped at the companion way, and Shiyanov said irritably.

"Maybe you are right, but I cannot take that responsibility upon myself. I just cannot, Greve. I'll report it to the Captain. Don't go away, he'll probably want to see you."

Mechanically, he adjusted his white tunic, which sat on him without a single crease, and walked past the guard towards the "dressing-room" door, while Lieutenant Greve stood waiting by the companion ladder, fingering his tooth-brush moustache and gazing thoughtfully at Volkovoi. The latter could not fathom that glance—a sailor was not supposed to stare at an officer—but it seemed to him that it was fixed on the slight bulge under his jumper where Kashchenko's packet lay. He could shift the cartridge belt so as to cover the packet, but he dared not move. He dared not even look down to see whether there was any bulge there. And as if on purpose, the bustling activities of loading work which had only recently filled the whole compartment, had stopped for some reason. Not a single sack came tumbling from above, not a single sailor was to be seen. All he saw was Lieutenant Greve standing within four paces of him, and that intense, drilling stare directed at the left side of his chest.

Volkovoi stood as per regulations, like a graven image, "heels together, toes apart, left arm down the seam of the trousers, right arm lightly supporting the rifle, body erect, but in no case leaning upon it"—as he had been taught in his "goon" days, and with eyes looking straight in front of him. Nevertheless he had a good side-long view of the lieutenant, whose keen cold eye was fixed on the hidden packet. Could he have noticed it? Volkovoi felt himself breaking out into a hot sweat; first it started on his neck, then his forehead, then covered his whole body with clammy heat, gathering in trickles which suddenly began to run down his face and neck.

What if he takes it into his head to search me? Look at him, all tensed up, like a dog coming to a point. But he can't do that, not without calling the Officer of the Day—a sentry can't be touched. If he reaches for that bell near the safe, that means he's decided to make a search. Better not wait until Khlebnikov and Sub-Lieutenant Kuntsevich come. I'll have to give up my rifle when relieved. There's only one way out then—as soon as he rings, shoot him down, rush up on deck and jump overboard. Anything but give up that packet. Let 'em search the sea for it! Come on, lieutenant, ring the bell. Ring it! Come on! You'll get your comeuppance from a sailor for everything!

Neither Volkovoi's face nor pose—the decreed rigid pose of the sentry—betrayed the storm of thoughts and feelings that raged within him. Nothing but the trickles of sweat that ran down his face, but then it was so hot and stuffy down there. Even Lieutenant Greve had taken out his handkerchief and was dabbing his forehead and neck with it, spreading around him a delicate scent compounded of perfume, English tobacco and fresh linen. He put the handkerchief back into his pocket and stared at Volkovoi again with narrowed eyes. Probably he did not even notice whether it was a sailor or a safe standing in front of him—both were similar motionless objects—and his glance merely sought a steady spot to enable his brain to work out the situation that was worrying him.

Old Whiskers had to be persuaded to arrest two or three suspicious sailors. True, the search had not revealed anything, but it was perfectly clear that Kostrushkin and Marsakov were unreliable. Determined action was called for. Captain von Lüste had often said that the naval officers' lack of foresight was a dangerous thing. Lieutenant Greve remembered only too well that mutiny incident in the spring when he had stood before the stokers, feeling for the Browning in his hip pocket. No officer aboard the *Generalissimo* realised as clearly as he did that a Bickford fuse was smouldering below decks, the flame of which was creeping to its deadly charge that would blow them all to smithereens. No one understood this, neither Shiyanov, that officious jackass, nor the Captain, who treated everything with indifference, nor that perfervid servant of the Okhranka, Sub-Lieutenant Gudkov. Not even Livitin, who was having spokes put in his wheel and therefore fell out of one extreme into another—from romanticism into Nietzscheanism, from patriotism into undergraduate nihilism—that clear-headed Livi, whom, were he, Greve, to be appointed Minister of Marine in a renovated parliamentary Russia, he would have no hesitation in putting in charge of the Baltic Fleet—

not even Livitin realised the horror of the situation. He alone, Lieutenant Greve, aesthete and musician, realised this with the cold essence of himself no one had any idea of; he, who, as sixteen-year-old naval cadet Volodya Greve, had had his first taste of revolution when the peasants burned down his father's country mansion, when the whole family, huddled in a cart, had made their way through rain and mud to the pine forest where they had only gone mushrooming before, when all of them—his senator grandfather and grandmother, the niece of a Swedish princess, and his society beauty of a mother, and his girl-college sister, had spent the night in the cabin of game warden Dormidont, a faithful old servant of the family, when Volodya himself had hidden in the hayloft, trembling like a hare. . . . Things like these were not forgotten, nor forgiven. They were galling, bitter memories that seared one's soul.

Who, here, could understand him? Here, in this ship, where there were no heirs to true aristocratic power? No, this was not England. There the Navy was a gentleman's Navy, where scions of lords and peers of the realm served as officers. No wonder the marines—that protective caste keeping watch and ward over the masters—had their mess decks and cabins there arranged between the crew's quarters and the officers' country. But here? Here you had to stand outside the door and wait for two stupid shortsighted martinets, two policemen, who held the fate of the ship in their hands, to make up their minds about taking appropriate action.

Greve impatiently took a step forward towards the "dressing-room".

Immediately Volkovoi tensed his whole body and lifted the rifle off the deck. If Greve reached for the bell, he would—

Two feet in heavy sailor's boots appeared in the hatchway, and a messenger clattered down the companion ladder in smart naval style. Holding the red form of a telegram in his outstretched hand, he ran past Greve into the "dressing-room" and almost immediately Lieutenant Buturlin rushed out and pressed the button behind Volkovoi's shoulder, keeping his finger on it until the frightened face of Khlebnikov popped up through the hatchway of the guardroom at the end of the left officers' passageway. Lifting his rifle, Khlebnikov ran up to the strongbox at the double, and Volkovoi, without waiting for his command, stepped aside, leaving white flour smudges on the linoleum. The lieutenant bent down, showing to Volkovoi the back of a neatly trimmed head, and turning the key in the lock, threw open the door of the lower compartment. Apparently there was another hiding place inside it, because Buturlin bent down on

one knee, as if taking the oath before the flag, and searching hastily among the bunch of keys, he found a small key, which he thrust into the depths of the box. There was a click, and Buturlin drew out a thin blue envelope with five blood-red eagle seals and slammed the door shut. Khlebnikov stepped up to him with the guard logbook, but the lieutenant snapped "Later!" and disappeared into the "dressing-room". Volkovoi stepped back into his place, screening the depositary of ship and state secrets with his back, and Lieutenant Greve strode swiftly to the wardroom.

All this took place with a nervous bustling activity that surprised Volkovoi.

There was not a man in the whole ship's company who did not know or guess what those sealed orders in the thin blue envelope were about.

Kept in a special compartment of the steel strongbox, it seldom saw the light of day, and when it did happen to be taken out, the officer in charge of classified matter contrived to hold it so that outsiders could see only the back of it with the five bloody seals. The other side, which might have been the other side of the moon for all that the sailors could see of it, was inscribed in heavy black type:

TOP SECRET.
TO BE OPENED UPON RECEIPT OF MOBILISATION
TELEGRAM

But not even the officers (who undoubtedly knew of the existence of these sealed orders and could guess their contents, upon which their very lives depended) had any clear idea what they and the whole ship would have to do after the blue envelope was opened and the mysterious power released from it would start off a train of unstoppable actions as disastrous to the enemy as it would be to their own ship (and consequently, to themselves).

It was presumed to contain the best of numerous other variants of a plan of action for each individual ship on the first day of the war co-ordinated with the operations of the fleet as a whole. It was believed that this plan was being continually corrected and improved according to circumstances known only to the Admiralty, such as changes in the political situation, the condition of the fleet, the launching of new ships and the withdrawal of old ones. For did not the Minister of Marine report the latest variant of the operational plan to His Majesty every year? And did not His

Majesty set his own mark upon the margin in blue pencil signifying "concurrence", whereat the sealed orders lying in the strongbox instantly lost their magic power and were replaced in the little secret drawer by another blue packet, destined to die a similar natural death or to release from its steel prison the mighty power of the first battle order that was to send the ship and her men out to sea to meet victory or death?

Where and how that would take place, none but the Admiral and the ship's Captain knew. The Baltic was a big place, and there were numerous targets for the first strike along its shores, which undoubtedly had been carefully considered by the Admiralty; a sudden strike which would take the enemy by surprise and decide the outcome of the whole campaign.

The more romantically inclined of the young officers of the Navy and enthusiastic midshipmen like Yuri Livitin believed in this decisive battle as your fanatical monk believes in the Immaculate Conception. The burning shame of Tsushima, the supercilious scorn of the naval officers of the Mistress of the Seas, the mocking sneers of the French, who, incidentally, had never fought a battle in their theatrical battleships—those multi-funnelled pot-bellied bathtubs—all this formed the groaning burden of the prayers beseeching the Admiralty: Give us cause for deeds of glory, O ruler of naval destinies. O High Priest of the Science of victory, successor to Apraksin and Senyavin, to Nakhimov and Ushakov, to Lazarev and Makarov, O Admiralty who art our brain and our thoughts, give us a chance to prove our youthful valour and prowess, our devotion to the Russian Navy, satisfy our intense craving for heroic deeds and victory! Let the Russian Navy rise in new and shining glory, painted with our blood! We shall fire broadsides from our guns and ram the enemy, we shall fearlessly blow up our magazines and scuttle our ships, we shall man suicidal fire-ships—give us but a chance to act! Only tell us where! Where will the blue envelope direct the firepower of our guns? Where, by thy wise ordainment, shall we seek to engage the German fleet? What German name of bay, strait, or island is destined to match the deathless glory that was Sinop, Cesma and Hangö Udde.

All this was kept a secret by the blue envelope, which was hidden away in the depths of the strongbox like the Death of Kashchei, behind seven locks and under seven seals. When the hour came, someone's hand would draw it from its steel drawer, someone's fingers would impatiently crush the seals and tear open the thick covering, and out of it would fly compressed naval thought, the quiddity and

upshot of years of calculation, conjecture and dispute pursuing a single purpose—victory. How much experience, knowledge, and talent were locked up within that blue envelope! How many plans there were straining to be released at last in order to act and come to life in salvoes and evolutions, to stain the pale lines traced on operation maps with the crimson of human blood, to sink enemy ships and devastate coastal towns. The hour would come when the German Kashchei would feel the dagger point of the Russian Admiralty's operational thought plunged straight into his heart.

And now that hour had struck.

The red wireless message forms containing the ships' numbers had already conveyed to the whole fleet the alarming signal: "Smoke, smoke, smoke." Obedient to that signal, the blue envelopes were taken out of their steel storage in all the ships of the Baltic Fleet—in the roadsteads of Helsingfors, Libau, Kronstadt, Revel, and the Gulfs of Finland, Riga and Bothnia, in the battleships and destroyers, in the cruisers and gunboats, in the mine-layers and transports, in the mine-sweepers and submarines, in the messenger vessels and the black-and-gold royal yachts. These envelopes were already being opened, here calmly, there with suppressed agitation, here with alarm, there with hope—the sudden hope that they might reveal some sensational plan of victory devised in secret by the Admiralty—or with the indifference of an undertaker's clerk, who knows only too well that an envelope addressed to his firm can contain no romantic surprises.

But there was hardly a naval man tearing open that envelope who realised that he was tearing all links with the shore, with his family, with the habits of a quiet life. In the crunch of breaking seals hardly anyone caught the crash of the national avalanche, which was to sweep away in its debris millions of maimed human lives. And no one, of course, saw reflected on the thick white paper the pallid countenance of death that awaited him. Service was service, and there was nothing of glamour or romance in it. The blue envelope informed the Captain, not what gallant part his ship would have to play in the first act of the tragedy that was already being enacted in the theatre of naval operations, but when and where he was to take his ship on the expiration of the mobilisation term and under whose command he was to place himself.

This sober, prosaic view of the blue envelope was quite understandable. It could contain no surprises, other than perhaps a retailored code table. The ships' captains, like many a senior officer, knew perfectly well that the basic idea of the operational plan had

not been altered a whit since 1908. The primary task of the Baltic Fleet, now as then, was to lay an enormous barrage of three thousand mines across the Gulf before the German fleet arrived, and then to prevent the enemy from destroying or weakening it by sweeping; and should he force it, to engage him in decisive battle.

All these evolutions—deployment, mine-laying, patrol and support operations, including combat manoeuvring at slow speed in shoaly water had been repeated for years at exercises, manoeuvres and naval staff games, which everyone was sick and tired of, and the details of which were known to the admiralties of all countries who had any navy worth mentioning. In this respect the sealed orders revealed nothing new. As to how the new plan of 1914 differed from that of 1912—the blue envelope was reticent, for this was the secret of the Admiralty.

It was perhaps just as well. . . .

“The 1914 Plan of Baltic Sea Naval Operations in the Event of a European War” contained such bitter hometruths, that were they given utterance in the blue envelopes they would have an extremely disheartening effect on the men called upon to carry out the designs of the Admiralty. From the very first pages of its preamble, the Plan of Operations, with frank courage—or, rather, with courageous frankness—admitted that operations, as such, were entirely out of the question, since the means for performing them were lacking. Of the four battleships afloat, two—the *Slava* and the *Tsesarevich*—would be out of action for a general refit in the autumn, and two cruisers of the *Admiral Makarov* class were due for a refitting of their boiler units. As for the torpedo craft—both surface and under-surface—these, as the Plan explained, “presented the most serious problem of all, since this type of weapon has not been renewed in the course of nine years and has reached the end of its service life”.* In regard to dockyards, the Plan explained with surprising serenity that Sveaborg and Revel, which the Fleet, for operational reasons, would be based upon, would “in 1914 remain in the same condition they were before, that is, they cannot even service the ships they now have”, owing to the lack of dock facilities and absence of loading gear for swift mobilisation, particularly as regards ship fuelling.

And since the third Baltic base—that of Libau—was planned in advance to be evacuated during the very first days of the war (because the army would not be able to defend it), this was one more reason why the Fleet’s operational zone was reduced by the Plan

* Here and elsewhere quotations are from the original “Plan of Operations”.

almost to the size of the notorious Marquis Puddle, east of the Helsingfors meridian. The Gulf of Riga, which was of considerable operational importance for the defence of our army's left flank, and the Abo-Aland skerries at the mouth of the Gulf of Bothnia, which were an important position in the event of expected action by Sweden, dropped out of the picture altogether. The reason was that "with the forces at our disposal we can only speak of the enemy's first strike", that is to say, his action against the capital. Baltic Sea operations, on the other hand, were ruled out entirely. The Plan excluded them, because "the enemy's overwhelming strength makes it impossible to carry out any operations on the high seas during the current year".

In short, the "Plan of Operations" boiled down to a well-thought-out "Plan of Operative Inaction" on the part of the Baltic Fleet. The vast, complex and highly expensive organism known as the Navy, which was controlled by the thoughts and cares of the Ministry of Marine and the Admiralty, could display its battle efficiency only to the extent of laying a central mine barrage along the Revel-Porkkala-Udd Line, a thing which every first-year sub-lieutenant as well as the admirals had known for a long time.

It was this operation that was now announced with solemn pomp by the blue envelopes, which revealed to the ships of the Baltic Fleet the naval secret that had been so long and carefully kept from them.

That historic moment was faithfully recorded by Warrant Officer Khlebnikov, who made the following scrawly entry on page fourteen of the Guard logbook aboard the battleship *Generalissimo Count Suvorov of Rymnik*:

"Post No. 3

"July 17, 0.07 a.m.

"Seal rimoved from botom drawer of sekret strongbox."

This was to have been undersigned by Lieutenant Buturlin, in charge of classified matter, and Sub-Lieutenant Kuntsevich. But there were no signatures, and this worried Khlebnikov far more than did the mysterious envelope, the appearance of which undoubtedly augured ominous events.

According to Guard Duty Instructions, those allowed access to Post 3 were: to the cashbox—the ship's Paymaster, to the secret strongbox—the officer in charge of classified matter. When any of these removed or renewed the seal, he did so in the presence of both the Master-at-Arms and the Guard Duty Officer, the latter signing the logbook to this effect. But on that exciting day the broken seal

on the upper door of the strongbox had not been replaced since the morning, because Lieutenant Buturlin kept going there all the time, taking out and putting back different coloured files, and the Master-at-Arms kept running out in answer to the bell in order to make the guard, who was subordinate to him alone, step aside from the door. The second, lower seal, however, remained in its place, and was handed over to Sub-Lieutenant Kuntsevich intact when the guard was relieved. Lieutenant Buturlin's perfunctory treatment of the so carefully guarded lower seal, when he had not only failed to send for Sub-Lieutenant Kuntsevich, but had not even warned Khlebnikov of his intention to open the lower compartment, was a direct breach of the Instructions.

It was a perspiring and perplexed Khlebnikov who now stood next to Volkovoi, uselessly guarding the now empty repository of the grim envelope and glancing towards the "dressing-room" as he waited impatiently for Buturlin to come back. But there was no sign of the Lieutenant. "Later!" It was all very well for him to snap, but what was he, the petty officer, to do? Maybe he ought to run straight to Sub-Lieutenant Kuntsevich and own up to this oversight on his part? Christ, what a mess he had landed in—and he was supposed to be a smart petty officer who knew his stuff! He shouldn't have let the man touch that door. When he saw him making for it he should have said: "Sorry, sir, but I can't let you touch that door, will you please send for the Master-at-Arms." But he didn't give him time to think, the way he rushed the thing. Ringing away like mad, you'd think it was battle quarters! And now he would have to answer for it. . . .

Volkovoi, who had managed during the confusion to readjust his cartridge-belt and make sure that the packet under it did not bulge, now glanced at Khlebnikov with malicious glee, well aware of the agonies he was suffering. The latter misinterpreted the glance, nodding his head and smacking his lips as if seeking sympathy, then suddenly pulled himself together. Behind the backs of the sailors, who were hauling along a huge bale, he saw Sub-Lieutenant Gudkov coming straight towards him. Tight-lipped, with narrowed eyes, he looked a very angry man. Khlebnikov realised at once what it was all about. Christ almighty, what a day this was! If it wasn't one thing, it was another!

"Where do you do your thinking—in your arse, you bloody fool?" Gudkov said quietly, coming up close. "Where's that receipt? Have I got to wait for it till morning?"

Khlebnikov hastily dived into his pocket and Volkovoi smiled to himself.

"I had to do the posting, sir. I was just through with it and was going to see you, when Lieutenant Buturlin rang for me. . . ."

"Going to see me. . . . D'you realise the job you were trusted with? Keeping us all waiting—me, the Commander. . . ."

Gudkov uttered a long but feeble oath, which was none the less offensive. Khlebnikov accepted it as his due, his perspiring face with its blinking little eyes expressing doglike devotion. Gudkov raised and lowered his eyebrows with a thoughtful air as he turned the paper over in his hand, then made for the door of Livitin's cabin. Volkovoi followed him with his eyes. Go along, his glance said, you've chosen the right time to report the gendarme case. The lieutenant'll give you his blessings all right. The way he went up in the air when I told him about the gun sight! If this sub goes and rubs it in now, I shouldn't be surprised if the lieutenant goes straight off to the Commander to get Tulmankov released. Without the man the turret's just useless, and here we are, facing war. Funny chap, all he cares about is his turret, doesn't see a thing going on under his nose. Tried to persuade Kudrin to re-enlist, promised him badges! For a moment Volkovoi really believed the lieutenant was capable of taking the sailor's part.

Gudkov stepped up to the door, which was opened on the instant by Livitin. He seemed to have been expecting the knock. But his voice sounded disappointed.

"Oh, it's you? I'm sorry, but I'm very busy."

Gudkov, as usual, raised a significant eyebrow.

"But I wanted to report to you about Tulmankov—"

"I understand. Later on, perhaps? I'm busy just now, I tell you."

And the door, not very politely, was closed, and the lock clicked. Gudkov shrugged and went down the passageway, trying to avoid the sailors, who had again filled the officers' quarters, dragging along sacks of flour and cases. Alone in his cabin, Livitin lit a cigarette and lay down on his bunk again, staring absently in front of him.

A single light burned in the cabin—the one on the writing table. The green lampshade threw a cone of light into the corner where the portrait stood under its thick gleaming glass. This gave to the cabin a subdued air of reflected light, adding deceptive space to the cramped metallic cube, which, with all its customary things, books, and photographs, acquired the desired touch of unreality.

This ghostly, soothing light was diffused by Irina's bare shoulders. Sloping beautifully, they gleamed above the smooth black fur that had slipped down to her elbows. It seemed as if the bottom of the frame alone kept the fur from slipping down any further, uncovering more of the dazzling white skin, slipping right down to the heels, because there was that elusive something in the woman's face which suggested that apart from that glossy strip of fur she had nothing else on. Irina looked into the cabin with an odd little smile, her long (and deep) eyes slightly narrowed, her sensitive nostrils slightly distended, and her head turned slightly left with the corner of her eyebrows slightly raised. It was this "slightly", this elusive "all-but" expression that seemed to justify the need for the bottom frame, which kept the fur from slipping down.

Apparently it was this "all-but", too, that explained the portrait's additional fixture, consisting of a little gilt rod along the top of the frame with tiny rings on it from which there hung a curtain of dark heavy silk. The curtain was now drawn aside, and this was a sign that Lieutenant Livitin was alone in the cabin.

Appearing for the first time early in the summer, this curtained portrait naturally occasioned a great deal of talk in the wardroom. Livitin laughed it off, leaving everyone to amuse himself in his own way with surmises and jokes. Gradually everyone became accustomed to the mysterious portrait and no longer took any notice of it.

That was the reason why the curtain had been made. It was this danger of "becoming accustomed and not noticing" that Livitin feared most of all. Everything that concerned Irina had to be always novel and desirable, always slightly inhibited, always elusive and remote—a millimetre beyond reach. Otherwise his feelings were likely to lose their freshness, become as unnoticeably familiar as the sun in the sky, as his own breath, as gold to the rich man. For this weighty reason their marriage was always being put off, because Irina lived in St. Petersburg for weeks on end, and when she did come to Helsingfors, Livitin often did not go ashore, although he had every opportunity to do so. And that, finally, was why the heavy curtain concealed the picture of Irina—the only one in the cabin.

It was seldom uncovered. This happened when his thoughts of Irina meant more to him than the ship, than the service, than life itself, or vice versa, when the thoughts of her faded to such an extent that they required artificial respiration. In either event the tiny rings were drawn aside with a tinkle, revealing the white radiance of bare shoulders, and then the portrait would come to life again, reviving feelings that were beginning to slumber.

Today's meeting was due to cowardly flight. From himself? Or from reality?

Outside the cabin door the inevitable was approaching with the tread of doom. It could be heard in the rustle of the coal tumbling down the shafts, in the rumble of the hoists lowering the shells into the magazines, in the gurgle of fresh water in the pipes under the deck head, in the soft lifeless thud of the sacks of flour that dropped like dead bodies, and in the oaths which the Senior Storekeeper sang out from time to time. The inevitable was approaching, throwing all its crushing weight upon the ship. Under this deadly load she sank deeper into the water inch by inch. The ship *had to* sink, and this slow imperceptible submergence under the weight of battle stores was the beginning of the end, events had been unleashed, war, apparently, had been decided, and the complex machinery of mass suicide had been set in motion. Death loomed already through the dim veil of the future.

From all this Lieutenant Livitin escaped into the ghostly reflected light that filled his cabin, setting up between himself and the rest of the world the unreliable barrier of a locked door.

The work on the mast was finished. The feverish strenuous task had proved to be merely a temporary outlet from the sense of unease he had been a prey to these last three days. Now he lay on his bunk, biting on a cigarette and gazing absently at the portrait. The glass had a cold impassive glint. Behind it Irina seemed far, far away, somewhere on another planet. His thoughts ran in rivulets, like a sudden summer downpour, interweaving, crisscrossing and meeting again. And like these feeble hurrying rivulets that skirt a stone lying in their path, so did his thoughts avoid what was most important of all. Two lines of verse rang in his head with maddening reiteration:

*In darkest of sable
I clad her gleaming shoulders.*

Livitin, who loved life, hardly ever let his mind dwell on such an unpleasant thing as death. Even so, he knew a thing about it that others did not know: he knew that death does not occur the moment a man's heart stops beating. It occurs much earlier, according to circumstances. Unfortunately, its occurrence could only be determined after the event, and that was the chief disadvantage of Livitin's discovery. For instance, in the case of Lieutenant Dolsky off the destroyer *Donskoi Kazak*, who shot himself last summer, his death occurred a week before the fatal shot, namely, at the very moment

when he got up from the card table at *Société's*, where he left all the contents of his ship's cashbox. And the officers of the Second Pacific Squadron, too, had been living as dead men throughout their five-month cruise that had taken them from Kronstadt to Tsushima.

According to Lieutenant Livitin's philosophy, death takes place when the hidden cause of it enters a man's life—whether it be Koch's bacillus inhaled with the air, a woman over whom you will eventually be killed in a duel, or an order of the Naval Department appointing you to a doomed ship. The thing was to discover this hidden cause and make your own counter-move to foil it.

In his own case, death had flapped its black wing the day before yesterday, at the day, hour and minute that the order had been received to prepare the ship for battle.

"In darkest of sable. . . . I clad her gleaming shoulders," the Lieutenant repeated bitterly to himself. "Face the music now, damn 'em all, live up to your oath. . . ."

Whom he was damning, he knew not.

The thud of another falling corpse came from out the passageway, hitting the door, and the hoarse voice sang out on its high note: "Stop up the hole, you asshead! Can't you see you've torn it!"

Somebody began puffing and heaving, obviously with his back pressed against the door. The thin iron of the door panel bent inwards, resisting the press of events from without. Livitin regarded it with detached curiosity, wondering whether it would cave in or not, then suddenly he pictured to himself with striking clarity that behind that thin sheet of enamel-painted iron stood the sea. The sea, that would soon rush into the belly of the great ship, flooding all its compartments, and cabins, and his own lungs. Events pounded upon his cabin door with the broad backside of a sailor, provoking him to defensive action. But what action, apart from that which he so zealously deceived himself and others with, what else apart from such vigorous preparations for his own funeral, could he undertake?

The day before yesterday, on July 14, he had started, with absolute, inevitable certainty, to die. The finale to this unusual pastime was not fixed by any calendar date. The time at his disposal for doing something to cheat the Old Hag was an unknown quantity.

The Old Hag was Fate.

Livitin's relations with her were determined by the literary and philosophical impedimenta which he had picked up at the waystops of life's road. In effect, they boiled down to a recognition of some malevolent mystical power bent on playing dirty tricks on him. To be on the safe side, he took care not to tease the Evil One in

trivial matters: he wouldn't be third to light his cigarette from the same match, he wouldn't begin important business on a Monday or a Friday if they happened to fall on the thirteenth day of the month, he would give the fig to a passing priest (hand in pocket) and would avoid overtaking a funeral procession. He did all this jokingly, self-mockingly, but with a shade of apprehension: it may be silly, but one cannot be too careful! Why ask for it? Sometimes he would hit a bad patch, when everything seemed to go wrong, and then he would try to coax the Old Hag by tacking on to every wishful statement the Eastern invocation of safety: "*Ksmet Alsa*", meaning "If Fate so wills it". But this was simple insurance. Deep down in his heart Lieutenant Livitin had long been convinced that the Old Hag had the best of it only when dealing with idiots who were unable to see through her clumsy wiles. A clever man could always guess them and circumvent them by a single adroit move that upset the whole mystic chessboard.

He had attempted that move this morning. The fateful signal flag Q, otherwise known as the "executive", had been fluttering at the foremast of the Russian Empire this third day. This flag, flown on the Admiral's ship, signified, according to the Signal Book: "Stand by to carry out evolution." The Old Hag had already rounded up the flag to its place as a delicate warning that when lowered, it would start off the All-Russian manoeuvre, when everything would be set in disastrous motion and the *Generalissimo*, according to the "Plan of Operations of the Baltic Fleet", would simply be sunk at the central minefield together with a Lieutenant Livitin immured in her after turret.

And that lieutenant, in a spirit of passionate protest, had attempted, all on his own, to alter the course of events. Yesterday, up in the top of the mast that was being cut down, amid the tumult of thoughts and feelings that assailed him, he had suddenly seen a way out. He had stumbled upon it by sheer chance, through a trifling incident. But that trifle, in Livitin's scale, matched Newton's apple in significance. Apparently, the idea that had been haunting him all those anxious days had done its subconscious work and needed only an accidental impact to materialise.

Occupied as he was with this unfamiliar job of dismasting, trying to figure out how to reach the vital centres of the spiral with the fiery cutting tongues of acetylene, or how best to lower the severed pieces to the deck, Livitin's mind at the same time was engaged elsewhere. Around him were his men, shouting gaily to each other, as they worked with a hearty will, while in front of him, beyond

the narrow Gulf, lay the broad expanse of the Baltic Sea, and out there, near Kiel, the German battleships, cruisers and destroyers were already steaming in battle formation. From this idiotic mast, as it were, he could see that calm confident parade of orderly strength, starting out on a pleasure trip to the Gulf of Finland, where, as they knew quite well, two or three obsolete ships were waiting for them at the minefield.

His heart was bleeding and a surge of bitterness rose up inside him. Too late! Too late now to mend things! The day of reckoning had come, a second Tsushima, the tragedy of which would be enacted out there in the narrow Gulf. The seal of doom had been set by the whole current of life, by inefficiency, hidebound indifference and utter forgetfulness of the lessons of history. And what could he do, a solitary lieutenant of the Russian Imperial Navy, ill-starred successor to Nakhimov's victories and Makarov's unrealised ideas?

Nevertheless, his mind was hard at work, thinking and thinking, casting about frantically for some way of giving the Germans a scare at the very first hour of the war—such a scare as would make them abandon the idea of putting out to sea. In this matter you could not rely either on the Admiralty or on the Naval Command. They had everything worked out beforehand, all plans had been weighed and sifted, and it was doubtful whether a turret officer of the *Generalissimo* knew the eve-of-war situation on the Baltic theatre better than they did.

But this turret officer had two decided advantages. One was his personal concern in the fate of his battleship, and this in itself was an important factor. Charity begins at home, and when forced to the wall, a man is capable of inventing gunpowder. Even Father Varlaam used to say: "I don't understand much about it, but when it comes to putting my neck in the noose, I know where I am." The other was that his mind was free from those operational clichés which for years had prevented the Admiralty from seeking new, perhaps unexpected, ways and means. The Admiralty and the Naval Command were accustomed to fight according to the rules, which he himself had been taught at Naval College. But then these rules of the naval art were international. This meant that the enemy could easily guess what actions would be taken against him—all he had to do was to imagine himself in my place and decide what he would do in such an event. Nothing new, nothing unexpected. Obviously, any operation calculated to discourage the German Fleet from making for the Gulf of Finland had to break away from these established notions. Here alone lay success. But what had to be done?

Newton's apple, true to custom, dropped unexpectedly. It happened the day before, on the second day of dismasting and on the third of those disturbing painful thoughts that had been clamouring for action, demanding that something should be done while there was still time in which to do it. It was late in the afternoon; in answer to the Wagnerian Fire-Magic music that sounded in the whistle and sparks of the blinding acetylene flame, a greenish star lit up in the sky, the evening star of Tannhauser's song; far below, the harbour slowly melted into the soft haze of dusk, but was still clearly discernible with all its ships, its picket-boats that scudded over the gleaming sheet of water, and the transport that slowly passed the *Generalissimo*—and it was strange to think that all this—star, flame, music and harbour—would disappear, as he, too, would disappear in this warm placid water.

Livitin pulled himself together and called a smoking break. He held his cigarette-case out to the sailors. Hands—burnt and grimy, strong in the fingers and rough in the skin—stretched towards him, the hands of gunners and electricians of his turret, who had suddenly recovered their skills as welders and riveters, mechanics and smiths. It was like a shift of something in space and time. The sailors were sitting near the ugly jutting stumps of steel tubes, smoking, gazing with satisfaction at their handiwork, and discussing in low tones how best to get at that accursed tube up there that was holding the whole hoop of the spiral. Plainly, the sailors were deriving immense satisfaction from this quiet workmen's talk, transported by some magic to this patch of deck from some other distant world. Lieutenant Livitin had no experience of these smoking breaks at workshops, depots and factories, but these men, torn from their habitual working-class surroundings, were obviously recollecting the smoking breaks they had had in the half-forgotten world which they had left behind them. And could he but understand this, he would think that that Old Hag—Fate—was giving these workers a last brief respite before going to meet their death.

Volkovoi sat smoking as he gazed at the passing transport, then addressed himself to the lieutenant.

"How do you make that out, sir? That transport there—she doesn't look like one of ours."

Livitin took a closer look at the vessel. It was difficult to make out her nationality, but she was obviously one of those freighters that called at Helsingfors for Finnish timber.

"A timber ship. Norwegian or British."

"Maybe German?"

"Maybe."

"War or no war, trade goes on—is that it?"

The lieutenant shrugged his shoulders.

"While there's no war yet the sea's open to everybody."

Volkovoi shook his head doubtfully.

"It isn't right. I wouldn't let 'em in now."

"A pity they don't let you command the fleet, Semyon," Tulmankov remarked sarcastically. "You'd make things hot!"

"But what is she doing in the fairway? It wouldn't take her long to slip two or three eggs over the side while nobody's looking. The Germans are a cunning lot."

"What d'you think the look-out ships are for?" Kostrushkin put in. "The destroyers have been out at sea since yesterday."

"The destroyers aren't inspecting anyone yet. Didn't you hear—there's no war yet, the sea's open to everybody! No, I wouldn't let her into the harbour," Volkovoi repeated, and threw the stub of his cigarette into the forge. "Shall I order 'Out pipes', sir?"

Livitin looked at him with vacant eyes and nodded. An idea, crazy but undoubtedly practicable, had shot through his mind; an audacious plan had instantly taken shape. "While there's no war yet the sea's open to everybody..." This phrase revealed to him the only possible solution. Everything suddenly became clear, acquired that concrete quality which had been missing all these days. It was amazing that he had never thought of it before!

The men resumed work, the gas whistled again amid blinding sparks, but Livitin stood silent, turning the sudden plan over in his mind, and trying to figure out the time factor and possibilities. The scheme was quite practicable, if undertaken immediately. But only the Naval Commander-in-Chief could make such a decision. It was to him, and him alone that this plan would have to be submitted.

Livitin called up Volkovoi and Tulmankov, told them that he would be back later, arranged with them what tubes had to be cut, and made for the hatchway. Swiftly descending the ladder inside the mast, he pondered this first difficulty. If he made report through the usual channels, that is, through the Commander to the Captain, who would submit the matter to the Admiral, who, in turn, would bring it to the notice of the Naval Staff, where they would decide whether to report it to the Commander-in-Chief or not—precious time, the plan's major factor, would be lost. This meant he would have to try other ways. What if he tried Boshnakov? Friends they had never been, but the friendly relations which had existed between them since Naval College days permitted him to ask Boshnakov, one

of the Admiral's flag lieutenants, to slip a letter into the Admiral's mail.

Livitin, with an air of decision, went to see Lieutenant Vetkin. The latter, amid the confusion of loading, which had turned the quarterdeck into a bustling yard, tried to preserve the composure befitting an Officer of the Day.

"I want to ask you a favour, Vetkin."

"At your service," the latter said, saluting.

"If you send the picket-boat to the *Rurik* will you please take a letter from me to Boshnakov."

"You can hand it to him yourself. Buturlin is preparing some papers for him, and he'll be dropping in to pick them up at nine o'clock."

There was no time to lose. Livitin hastily checked his calculations with the chart, and sat down to write a letter, giving little attention to style. The thing was to set forth his main idea, and the Admiral would grasp it. And the idea was this.

A number of steamers belonging to commercial houses in various countries were being detained in Russian ports pending clarification of the political situation. Livitin's plan was to buy one of these steamers (preferably at Libau or Riga), keeping her old name, and to fit her out as a mine-layer of twenty or thirty mines' capacity. All that was needed for this was to make a hidden half-port aft, lay down mine rails in the hold, and disguise the deck and the hold with timber stacks. All this could be done in twenty-four hours. The steamer, provided with false papers, would make for the Baltic straits, where she would wait for the prearranged WT signal, keeping as close as possible to the Kiel bay. During the first hour of war she would slip her mines into the channel and scuttle ship. This would be enough to raise a panic in the German fleet as soon as it steamed out. As to the crew, it was to make for the homeshore by boat or perish—he did not want to think about the latter contingency, since the steamer was to be captained by Lieutenant Eivitin, who asked to be given this commission by reason of his knowledge of the English language.

The letter was ready just in time for Lieutenant Boshnakov, who came dashing in by picket-boat. He turned the envelope over in his hand, delicately avoided asking what it was about, then said, after a thoughtful pause:

"Only for you, Livi. But I warn you—I'll wriggle out of it, but you. . . . Mind you don't get a bottle for your pains."

So far everything had gone off well. Boshnakov had come dashing

back to the ship again that morning on staff business, saying that the Admiral was sending him to Björkö after dinner aboard a destroyer, and whispering conspiratorially into Livitin's ear that he had slipped his letter into the Admiral's private mail folder and that the Old Man was keeping "mum" so far. Livitin had been waiting the whole evening for the Admiral to send for him—that was why he had opened the door to Gudkov so quickly.

He would give a lot to be sitting now in the cozy bachelor-girl apartment at No. 7 Mundgatan, where the flowers and carpets, the scent and silk-shaded lamps soothed a man and cooled all passions except one. Often, flushed with success, he would say to Irina: "Here's the bull I have dedicated to you!" It would be either a naval prize for target practice, or a medal for rescuing a drowning gunner who had slipped into the icy water, or a speech made at a sitting of the Naval Court in the capacity of counsel for the defence, which saved a sailor from hanging for the murder of his prostitute-mistress.

These torero bulls, however, were pure romance. The attack on Kiel might have been his prize bull, but the game had lost its attraction. Life was stepping off the boards of theatrical romance into the grim, bleak, iron atmosphere of war. Doom, preordained by another's will, lurked in the death-trap of the *Generalissimo*. To be sure, that other doom which he had himself summoned from the depths of hell would have been more spectacular and probably easier: glory or death (possibly the two together—glory and death)—that was how the matter stood. And he, by his own free will, had decided on this attempt, which would shape the future pattern of his life or snap the thread of it.

And although he had made this resolve, he still felt that there was something missing. Apparently his whole being—that of a strong handsome man of twenty-five—revolted against this suicidal decision and needed some extra impulse. If she, who had possessed his whole life now for nearly two years, eluding and luring, repelling and attracting, inflaming jealousy and rewarding it with passion, she who hindered rather than helped him live, who was his heavy cross and his aching joy—if Irina would but say her word! If she would tell him what she thought of this plan, which more properly could be called adventure! If she would but whisper: "I'm afraid . . . afraid for you." Or if she would say: "I am proud of you—you are my Siegfried." Or if she would simply start crying, as his mother once did on hearing that he had decided to enter Naval College. God, if she would say something, anything—were it even by a glance, a sob, or a gesture!

But the portrait was silent. Radiant with the warm marble of her shoulders, holding up the slipping fur, her long eyes slightly narrowed, her sensitive nostrils slightly dilated, and the arc of her brow slightly raised, Irina looked at him in silence. She was just as silent whenever he began to read his verses to her or when, engaged in a futile dialogue with himself, he felt that odd, mute little smile upon himself, hating it for its muteness and adoring it for the appeal that lurked in it, craving silence instead of words.

There was a knock at the door again. Livitin glanced at the clock—it was past midnight; no use waiting. He got up slowly, turned the lampshade away, drew the curtain over the portrait, then opened the door. Lieutenant Vetkin was standing outside.

"My congratulations," he said with affected cheerfulness. "Smoke, smoke, smoke. Saw it myself in the wireless cabin."

"So that's that," Lieutenant Livitin answered with the cool composure which the occasion called for. "'His one good fortune was that he had lots of hair growing in his nose. . . .' Looks like I've missed the bus, Vetkin."

"I don't get you."

"Never mind. So it's war?"

"Who knows. We'll soon have that blasted smoke explained to us, I suppose. There it comes. Mamotka's charging in like a fire brigade," Vetkin said, looking down the passageway.

Indeed, Mamotka came running up to the officers, panting.

"The Captain invites all the officers into the saloon, sir. This very minute, sir."

"All right, run along," Vetkin answered, then turned to Livitin. "Come on, Livi. We know where we are now."

While Livitin went into his cabin for his cap, both passageways began to fill with officers. They walked in silence past the sailors, who had stopped working and pressed their bodies back against the bulkheads; they walked at a leisurely pace, trying to look calm and unconcerned, but not all of them succeeded in this, as the guard at Post No. 3 could distinctly see—the officers were bearing straight down on him.

Volkovoi had dismissed the thought of the hidden packet from his mind: the officers now had other things to think of, and besides, it made no bulge at all. This unusual procession could mean only one thing—the war had started at last, and that blue envelope which Buturlin had taken out of the safe must have been combat orders.

But whereas Volkovoi had guessed, if only vaguely, the potent force of that blue envelope, which had set all the officers in motion,

these officers now passing him were totally unaware of the fact that here, under guard, hidden next to the heart of a sailor, lay another packet of far greater and formidable power. Even Volkovoi did not know what it was. All he knew was that it contained something from the St. Petersburg Committee of the Social-Democratic Party of the Bolsheviks. It might be a newspaper sheet, telling of things that were only whispered aboard the ship—of the July days in St. Petersburg. It might contain a letter from Party comrades giving important information. It could be leaflets, or directions how to act at that difficult and dangerous moment. Whatever it was, it was their own plan of conduct of the war, the great war of the people against the tsar. Tomorrow the packet would be opened in a safe place and its contents made known to the men. And then the message would embark on its long voyage of triumphant action.

The last to pass by that packet was Sub-Lieutenant Gudkov, wearing his customary air of portentous preoccupation, and holding in his hand the receipt for Tulmankov, which he had not yet had time to hand over to the Commander. There was contempt and mockery in the glance that Volkovoi shot at his back as he passed.

On entering the Captain's cabin Gudkov was about to go up to Shiyanov, but the latter beckoned to Lieutenant Livitin and drew him into a corner.

"I say, Livitin," he began in a low voice, "the Captain had ordered you to report to the Admiral aboard the *Rurik* at morning colours. What's it all about, my boy?"

Livitin shrugged his shoulders, although his heart suddenly leapt in joyous anticipation.

"I have no idea, sir," he said as casually as he could.

"The Captain allows you to take his pinnace," Shiyanov went on. "I've told the Watch."

"Thank you very much, sir," Livitin said with a bow. Further conversation was interrupted by the appearance of the Captain.

The officers stood at attention. Breathing heavily into his reddish moustache, the Captain went up to the table.

"Gentlemen," he said quietly, "His Majesty has been pleased to announce mobilisation of the Baltic Fleet. You will receive your mobilisation schedules from Lieutenant Buturlin."

CHAPTER 13

The berth seemed unusually hard, his legs, bent at the knees, were painfully stiff, and the click of the wheels on the track hammered in his head, but all this was a mere trifle compared with the

feeling of embarrassment and humiliation which had not left Yuri ever since he had entered the railway coach at Vyborg and hastened to occupy the only empty scat in it.

The lights were on in the coach and his seat was just under one of the two lamps hanging from the ceiling. This full exposure was more harassing than anything else. True, all precautions had been taken: his pea jacket was folded with the shoulder straps inside and placed on the luggage rack together with his cap (the lettering on which was turned to the wall) and his long sword (which he had contrived to conceal; as for his jumper, Yuri managed, by sitting down next to a sleeping Finn in oilskins and leather cap, to pull it back so that the straps came down almost to his shoulder-blades, well out of sight of curious eyes.

With the insignia of his midshipman's rank thus effectually concealed, Yuri tried to go to sleep, but he couldn't. He was sitting in an uncomfortable posture and could not stretch his legs out; opposite, sleeping with his shoulder leaning against the passenger next to him, was a student in a uniform jacket and baggy green trousers. It was left for Yuri to survey the sleeping passengers and wait miserably for nine o'clock, when the train would steam into Helsingfors railway station and he would be able at last to leave this beastly coach.

There was nothing beastly about the coach. It was just an ordinary third-class Finnish railway coach, spotlessly clean and roomy. The thrifty Finns did not want to pay extra for the luxury of stretching their bodies on a wooden berth on a short journey, when they could sit comfortably on it three in a row, enjoying the use of armrests. Travelling third-class in an express train was nothing to be ashamed of—a fact which even the Naval College stressed by granting the midshipmen a rebate (officially known as a travelling warrant) on railway fares, which held good only for third-class travel. No self-respecting midshipman, however, would dream of travelling third-class, no more than he would be seen wearing the skimpy issue-room sword. This, on the part of the Admiralty, was an obvious blunder. As far as the officers were concerned this question had been decided with unmistakable clarity—they were simply forbidden to travel third-class and had the right to travel in a second-class coach with a third-class ticket. Why then was the Admiralty so stingy in regard to the midshipman, that coming officer of the Navy? Usually, when travelling to Helsingfors, Yuri would correct this tactlessness on the part of the "Gold Braid" by scornfully tossing his red warrant down at the booking office and paying the full second-class fare. But today

it was different. Today he was embarking on the unknown and had to be careful with his money.

Suddenly and disturbingly, money had taken on a new quality. Until then he had never given it much thought. It discharged its duty, light and brilliant as that of a palace guard, the duty of upholding the dignity of the midshipman, with punctilious care. It had tinkled or rustled in a flat wallet and left its suede bed without regret. Furlough spread its sunny days beyond the College walls like a blossoming field, and the half-imperials* flew out of the wallet like heavy golden bees to collect the sweet honey of gloves, monogrammed cigarettes, eau-de-cologne, thick note-paper, fancy tooth-brushes, boxes of chocolates or other gifts of gallantry—all those significant trifles that are essential to life in a capital city. Soft silky five-ruble notes became transformed into blue-velveteen stall seats at the Mariinsky Theatre, gay green three-ruble notes were lured to the windows of florists' shops, silver rolled through life in the gleaming wheels of taxicabs, and copper clanked its way through tramcars.

A midshipman's money had its own channels, its own circle of acquaintances, its own possibilities in keeping with its owner's position and age. Still forbidden restaurants, night clubs and high-class brothels had not yet opened their plate-glass doors before it; the greedy hands of tailors did not reach out for it (the College clad its members fairly well, and the uniform required only slight alterations); poker, that curse of lieutenants, had not yet opened the insatiate jaws of its four kings to it; and women, scorning the ugly duckling, had not yet shown it the innumerable paths to the cistern of the Danaïdes. All this was still waiting for the longed-for sub-lieutenant's one ring, for kit allowance, travelling allowance, dislocation allowance, mess allowance, rewards, first pay, the little white book of officer's loan capital, the chance of "touching" a friendly paymaster for a loan out of ship's paint sums, and the right to sign I.O.U.s. Barely a tenth of the world had been discovered, and exciting Americas still lay before the young seafarer, whose money still fluttered over the naive flowers of innocent pleasures.

This carefree midshipman's money had not demeaned itself by pandering to gross needs, such as food, lodging and clothing; it did not smell of the washerwoman's paraffin or soap, of baby's napkins, medicines, rye bread, or the acrid smoke of firewood.

* A gold coin worth R7.50.—*Tr.*

Perhaps that was why it went uncounted, coming and going so easily. The lack of it held no threat of starvation or distress, but merely that of shame.

That day, however, moncy (twenty rubles borrowed a week ago from Mme. Izvekova and ten rubles the same day from Lieutenant Pakhomov against his perfunctory word of honour) had become a worry. It stuck out of the wallet like a question mark that would not be tucked in—would it last or not? Those thirty rubles had to keep Yuri afloat until the day his fate was decided, and that could take place only at Abo, a small port on the coast of the Gulf of Bothnia, where, according to his conjecture, there stood the destroyer flotilla he was interested in.

The war had been somewhat precipitate, and this had to be promptly remedied by steps of one's own. It had come three years too soon, and had found Yuri a trainee, a mere boy. It was preparing to carry its heavy banners past the walls of the Naval College, decorate a few of the elect with the black-and-yellow ribbon of the St. George's Cross, and then disappear through the oaken doors of the diplomatic offices for many a long year—war didn't happen every decade, damn it! And so the thrilling event he had been looking forward to for so long—promotion to officer rank—promised now to be prolonged agony instead of a joy. It would be no easy thing to sail in a ship which had spent her ammunition, to live in the cabin of sub-lieutenant so-and-so killed in action, to sit in the wardroom like a darned fool listening to evening stories of battles he had taken no part in, of victories he had been left out of—listening in silence, red with shame and envy; to begin his service without having issued a single "Shoot!" command; to wear a tunic unwetted by the salvo splash of a terrifying straddle; to bask in the glory which others had won for the fleet! Such a prospect was unthinkable, insulting to one's pride and self-respect.

Yuri had been fretting ever since that evening in the Izvekovs' flat, when the fiery word "War" had come bursting in together with Lieutenant Pakhomov. The three days' leave granted by the College on the occasion of the presidential reception had been spent by him in a fever of excitement, as it had by the whole city, whose temperature, raised by the Franco-Russian festivities and unrest at the factories, continued to mount dangerously. In the newspapers, "our own correspondents" shouted more and more loudly and openly with every day's issue about Austria's arrogant behaviour, about the offensive ultimatum, which proud Serbia, of course, would reject, about Germany's readiness to support Austria's demand, and Russia's

sacred obligation to defend her younger brother-Slavs. During his visits at Liteiny, Sergei Izvekov had spoken anxiously about factories that were coming to a standstill one after another, about the number of strikers having already topped a hundred thousand, and God knows what this would lead to unless the war turned the workers' minds the other way—and in the same breath rapturously devised plans of an offensive against Austria and Germany simultaneously, demonstrating with great ingenuity enveloping attacks on maps of all scales (which the “boys”, anticipating events, had bought). Mme. Izvekova sobbed over her soup, pitting a mother's tears against Valentin's sudden decision, his revolutionary enthusiasms forgotten, to enlist in Pakhomov's regiment, while Polina wept heartbrokenly and incessantly, for Pakhomov had parted with his school and was leaving in a day or two for some half-guards' regiment somewhere near Grodno.

On returning to Björkö, Yuri found that he was not the only one to be in such a fever of excitement. The *Aurora* was packed to her trucks with conjecture, and the gun-room had become a fashionable salon buzzing with rumours and gossip, originating chiefly from Count Bobrinsky, who pretended to have the latest news straight from the horse's mouth—in this case from the officers who often strolled the upper deck with him. The rumours were varied and contradictory, some saying that everybody would be assigned to the fighting ships, that the company would be sent to the Pacific, where there was no war, and they would cruise about there until Christmas, going as far down as the southern latitudes; others, on the contrary, that they would all be returned to College to rush through their training, since promotion would come very early. Amid all this clamorous tangle, which teased the imagination, Yuri experienced the fretful feeling of a man who is late at a spectacle which he knows to be running only once. There was nobody he could confide in or seek advice from. The plan of action he had devised was workable only on condition that no one knew about it.

And suddenly everything was decided for him in the most humdrum official manner. Yesterday morning at colours Old Dodo (otherwise known as Commander Shilkin, Senior Officer of the College) had read out before the ranks the order announcing that the ships of the Naval College were to be paid off and the midshipmen granted furlough until resumption of College studies, that is, until the First of September.

Furlough! Furlough at such a time! No greater mockery of fate could be imagined. All that day the midshipmen had gone about

like lost souls, the rumours and gossip died down. Yuri, after standing the signal watch from twelve till six, ate the cutlets left over for the watch, climbed the starboard lower booms and sat down there gloomily on the raised platform in which the painters of the Captain's cutter lay coiled like a white snake. This was Yuri's favourite spot for solitary reflections, discovered at the beginning of the cruise.

The fourteen-oar mahogany cutter—a creature of grace and beauty, pride of the cruiser and envy of the fleet—was a sort of ship's relic. She had been made with loving care by the craftsmen of Kronstadt in place of the boat which had been destroyed by fire during the battle of Tsushima. The highly polished shell shone with a deep reddish glow, and everything within it—the gunwale, thwarts, backboards, and latticed afterhatch—was glass-papered with the same infinite care, bringing out the noble quality of the wood in all its delicately pink and warm virginal beauty, which seemed even to smell of the tropics. In contrast to the poor taste shown on other ships, where the metallic parts of the captains' pinnaces were nickel-plated, the *Aurora's* were of yellow-gold copper—rowlocks, tiller treenails and all. The oarsmen (all midshipmen) could step into her only barefooted and in clean working rig, and she could only be lowered in the presence of the *Aurora's* Commander, First Lieutenant Engelhardt, who took care that her sides swung free of the davits and even the soft white falls.

Yuri Livitin had the honour of being one of the chosen fifteen acolytes who ministered to this ship's idol and shared with them the daily task of glass-papering the woodwork and polishing all the brasswork (the midshipmen did not trust the ordinary naval polish issued for the purpose and excelled in procuring every conceivable make of polish and compounds of foreign origin together with flannel, shammy, and even soft fur). While sharing the general adoration for this craft, however, Yuri's attitude towards her had a special quality of its own. He saw in this pampered beauty a symbol of naval *beau idéal*—useless, perhaps, but none the less captivating. She stood there like a large table toy, resting on the yellow leather pads of the keel-blocks, her graceful lines clothed in taut pure-white covers, like a severe dress that covers a woman's body. But like the lucky man who knows all the secret delights of that body, Yuri knew all the enchantment of that cutter, when, quivering to the rhythmic stroke of the oars, she gathered speed, or when, running before the wind with a buoyant lift and cleaving the hissing waves with her prow, she passed astern of the *Aurora*,

with tall white bellying sails, as if conscious of all the admiring eyes that watched her.

She recaptured the glamour and stately beauty of Nakhimov's fleet, and there, in that secluded spot, one was able to think, dream, and give rein to one's imagination far better than one could amid the perpetual clamour of the gun-room, which ceased only when the command to "Pipe Down", or attending lessons was piped. During the last exercise cruise aboard the *Verny Yuri's* favourite spot for this purpose was the foremast crosstree. In his cadet days he had often had occasion to sit on this crosspiece crowning the foremast-head, where the punished cadet was sent for an hour or two by way of "sky cells", and he had got so used to this spacious silence high above the deck that he started climbing up there of his own free will—unobserved, of course, by the Officer of the Day. The *Aurora* had no crosstrees (in any case it would be improper for a midshipman to be seen up there) and so Yuri sought refuge from the noise here at the lower booms, next to the beautiful cutter, which evoked in him such wonderfully light, vague, but pleasurable thoughts and dreams.

This time, however, the cutter was no help. His thoughts were prickly, disturbing, and compulsive. It was perfectly clear that the time had come for him to carry out this plan, the only possible plan under the circumstances.

This plan, in short, consisted in a swift snatch at glory. It awaited Yuri, thunderous and alluring, in the green wastes of the Baltic, at the crossing of the sea routes from Sweden and from Germany. There, between the gulfs of Bothnia and Finland, in the narrow necks of the two Baltic pools, the first naval engagement was inevitable. And he had to get to Abo in time to shoulder aside the crowd of competitors and toss his life upon the green wave, as upon the cloth of a gaming-table—win or lose.... The memorial plaques at the Naval College were of two kinds: one black, in the church, with the names of the fallen, and the other white, in the mess hall, with the names of the bearers of the St. George's Cross. The name of Yuri Livitin, flung up by the mighty impact of the first naval engagement, might fall upon either the white or the black. That was what his plan amounted to.

Which of those lean greyhounds straining at the leash on the distant scent of the German quarry, which of the destroyers would carry Yuri out upon the surging wave of success, and how, precisely, he would contrive to join her, were questions which Yuri could not yet answer. But these prosy unimportant details paled before

the stupendous significance of his decision, and Yuri dismissed them from his mind. Three of the destroyers were commanded by friends of Nikolai, who were bound to agree with Yuri that it was ridiculous for a fellow to waste his time on leave when the fleet was putting out to sea to pick up the glove which the insolent German had thrown down. The ships, of course, were undermanned as usual (who knows when the reserves would arrive!), and every commanding officer would jump at the chance of getting a volunteer, who... Who what? That accursed question pulled Yuri up in mid-career—what, in fact, *could* he do aboard a ship? This, too, he dismissed immediately. Damn it all, he could do anything—act as signalman, gunner, helmsman... It wasn't as if he was one of your clodhoppers whom it took years to lick into shape!

The idea appealed to him more and more. There was even a certain cachet in starting the war as a lower-deck rating. Look how many titled men there were among the rank and file in the Caucasus, who caught crosses and bullets, wounds and ranks! The Baltic Sea was simply littered with the black crosses of the German ensigns, and any one of them, leaving its blackness in the salt water, was likely to emerge from it in the shape of a little white cross on a black-and-yellow striped ribbon. "Who, receiving a wound in battle, shall continue his Watch until the battle is over ... who, by a well-aimed shot, shall sink an enemy ship ... who, at the risk of his own life, shall extinguish a fire aboard a vessel ..."—ran the Statute of the Order of St. George, where deeds of valour were catalogued and classified, and each item on the list offered at least the chance of "Promotion to the rank of sub-lieutenant for service in battle".

That being the case, the examination would probably be a mere formality, since standing before the examiners' desk would be a young man with two—on second modest thoughts Yuri reduced them to one—St. George's Cross of a sailor who knew his ship like the back of his hand and his ship duties like the Lord's Prayer. A man like that was bound to command respect. And wasn't that how Admiral von Schantz himself had passed his examination in Vyborg, an eighteen-year-old seaman-volunteer with a distinguished service record?

These daydreams were all very well, but Yuri forced himself back into the world of realities. He had to do something immediately. Tomorrow morning the *Aurora* would sail for Kronstadt, and the day after that the company commander at the College would hand him his leave ticket, which would be made out, of course, on the

Izvekova's flat, and that would complicate matters hopelessly. Try and get to Abo with it! Military patrols had been set up at all the railway stations and he was sure to run up against one. What about borrowing Misha's school jacket?—the thought flashed across his mind. But the next minute he cursed himself for a fool: that meant appearing on the destroyer as a young squirt. Yuri could think of nothing, and it was in a bad humour that he went below in response to the evening prayers signal.

But suddenly everything changed. While he was slinging his hummock to the deckhead, Yuri heard the whistle and the voice of Alexander Krasnov, who was keeping the watch: "Midshipman Livitin report to the upper deck, port gangway!" Yuri tumbled up, and in the light of floodlamp he saw an officer, who handed him a letter and told him with a smile that Lieutenant Livitin had asked him, Lieutenant Boshnakov, to escort his brother aboard the ship, and that he had tackled Old Dodo (that was what he actually called him, to Yuri's great delight) and that everything had been arranged, but he would have to rush through with the leave papers, as the *Likhoi* was returning to Helsingfors in twenty-five or thirty minutes.

As in a dream, Yuri read the letter right there, at the gangway (he thought it very amusing and witty), and rushed off to the Senior College Officer.

Yuri missed the destroyer, despite the fact that Old Dodo (who had been Boshnakov's and Livitin's company commander at the College) was so deeply touched that he promptly endorsed Yuri's report, on which he wrote: "Make out leave ticket for two days and travel voucher" and sent it himself by messenger to the writers. The delay was caused by the routine involved in handing in his hummock, blanket roll and work clothes, as he would not be coming back to the *Aurora*. Livitin's departure created a sensation on ship-board. Everyone frankly envied him—even Bobrinsky, who, despite his sudden leave, had forgotten after all to invite Yuri to dinner in St. Petersburg. What a lucky fellow to be in the *active fleet* at such a time (that was what the Helsingfors ships were now significantly called before the war had even begun). Everyone helped him to collect his things and haul them off to the boatswain's store, while Krasnov, his bosom friend, rendered him an inestimable service by sending down to tell him that as luck would have it, the provision hoy was going straight to Vyborg, if Livitin cared to catch it. . . .

Livitin, of course, managed to catch it, and half an hour before the arrival of the St. Petersburg-Helsingfors express which he

was in the habit of travelling in, Yuri was at the booking office, where, deciding to husband his meagre resources, he produced for the first time in his life his red travel voucher entitling him to a third-class ticket at a fifty per cent rebate. This tumultuous turn of events had such a stimulating effect upon him that he walked up and down the platform, spinning brightly coloured dreams. Everything would go off splendidly now! Nikolai had arranged this business of his leave so cleverly that he thought of him as a magician. He only had to write a letter to one of his friends commanding a destroyer for Yuri to be taken on at once. He did not have the slightest doubt that Nikolai would approve of his plan, seeing that he, too, had something up his sleeve of which Yuri knew nothing yet. Say what you like, but those Livitin brothers were lucky beggars to be right in the thick of it at the very outset of the war! The thought tickled him so much that he smiled triumphantly at a homely looking Finnish girl with a basket on her arm who was waiting for the train. The startled girl dropped her eyes.

In this spirit of exhilaration he was about to step towards the sleeping-car, which had stopped just where he stood, but he remembered the accursed travel voucher, and his spirits were damped at once. Why the devil should he scrimp like a student when everything was working out so well and tomorrow aboard the *Generalissimo* Nikolai would give him all the markkas he needed to meet the initial difficulties of life aboard a destroyer? He followed the girl with the basket into the next coach with a feeling of deflation. You could never tell who might see the midshipman in this plebeian company! The humiliating disposal of pea jacket and sword upset him still more. On top of this he decided to reread Nikolai's letter, and it dawned on him that it was not half as cheerful as he had thought at first. The note of dejection and anxiety that broke through the facetious lines was so unusual in a letter of his brother's, that the mood suddenly communicated itself to Yuri. It was with a sort of superstitious fear that he now reread the postscript: "I'm in the blues. You'd better hurry, or you may miss me, and God knows when we may meet again. . . ."

He felt ill at ease, a prey to vague disturbing thoughts that drove sleep from his eyes, although aboard the *Aurora* he had always been able to drop off at any time and in any pose. Not until the window paled and pine trees began to run past with eye-wearying monotony, did his thoughts begin to wander and he dropped his head on the oilskinned shoulder of his neighbour, sinking into that deep sleep of the sailor from which only the bugle or the loud

clang of the bells could rouse him. He stretched his legs with unconscious enjoyment, touching the knees of the student who slept opposite. The latter started up and looked around him wild-eyed, like a man who doesn't know where he is; he tried in vain to settle down to sleep again; in the end he opened his eyes, drew up his legs and began to look out of the window.

Out there, in the brightening morning light, a high wall of dark-green fir-trees ran past. Here and there fluffy young pines stood out in sunny patches followed by the yellow-red pillared trunks of their elder brothers; then it grew dark again in the coach from the massed ranks of the towering fir-trees, whose shaggy, almost black branches hung over the track. At times the forest retreated, revealing either a small rock-strewn field with a low log-built hut in it dark with age and bearing the unmistakable signs of poverty, or a sunny clearing with five or six ruminating cows in it and the unfamiliar sight of a prettily painted house on a foundation of rocks and boulders held together by white seams of cement—a Finnish farmstead, grim castle of hard-earned Finnish prosperity. Someone had lowered a window further down the car, and the stuffy atmosphere gave place to the fresh clean air of the forest. The student was now wide awake. Close outside the window stretched grey-blue cliffs with craggy ledges and crevices from which life-greedy plants strained towards the sky—here a starveling bush growing sideways, there a stunted timberling with its stem twisted and bent as if in a desperate attempt to break out of its stony prison.

And then, with a silent burst of light—which one seemed to feel even with the skin of one's face—there swam into view something, which, for the moment, one was unable to give a name to. A second later he realised that it was the smooth sheet of the gulf. Lustrous with the silvery morning sparkle, the immensity of outspread sea gladdened the eye and heart. The next moment, however, the old fir-trees hurried to draw their thick curtain, shutting out the momentary vision, and then the stone wall rose outside the window, which needed only bars on it to complete the picture.

The presence of that smooth luminous plain could be felt all the time behind that wall, and the eyes waited eagerly for it to reappear. When it finally did, Tisheninov smiled involuntarily at the silver-blue expanse as one does to a new acquaintance in whom one perceives the promise of a future friend.

What an unexpected turn things had taken! Four days ago he never suspected that his life would be linked with the sea, which he had never quite seen properly, and with warships, of which he

knew nothing at all. This important turn in his life, however, had taken place, and it was time he got used to the idea that everything would be different now—even the clothes he wore would be like that fancy-dress outfit that young sailor opposite was rigged out in: those trousers with the strange flap, that childish-looking jumper with the blue collar, and that cap with the ribbons. And together with the familiar student's jacket and Russian blouse, he would have to part with that restless but free life he had chosen for himself, with the possibility of expressing his mind whenever he felt like it. He would have to watch his every step, his every word, he would have to learn to control his feelings, to fit into a different environment, and make a quite different man of himself.

The sudden change had taken place on Sunday, the 13th of July, when Tisheninov had come again to Kudrin's place to spend the night, as arranged. It had been a difficult day. Although over two-hundred thousand workers were already on strike all over St. Petersburg, the threat of war and mobilisation (which was expected at any moment) shook the resolution of those who followed in the wake of others instead of blazing their own difficult path. At the Lessner Works the management had decided on a lockout, the workers being notified that if they did not resume work on Monday they would all be discharged and taken on again with discrimination. A split occurred immediately in the Strike Committee, the majority of which was for calling off the strike. It was this that brought Tisheninov back to Kudrin late in the afternoon to ask his advice. Kudrin interrupted him straight away.

"We've been given a different job now, Yegor—to work among the sailors. War looks like the real thing. I'll be back again in the *Generalissimo*, and there we'll meet."

"I'm afraid not," Tisheninov said. "They'll stick me into the infantry, but that won't be so soon—I've got a postponement at the Technological Institute, third year."

Kudrin regarded him steadily.

"We have different plans for you, Yegor. You'll have to join up as a naval cadet," he said gravely. "You'll wear a monkey jacket for a year or two, and then work your way up to Engineer Sub-Lieutenant. Officer on the outside, our man inside. Get the idea?"

Tisheninov laughed heartily.

"Did it take you long to think that up, Fyodor?"

"It isn't my think-up, it's the St. Petersburg Committee's," Kudrin answered in the same grave tone. "They did a lot of thinking, and not about you alone. Now, consider it yourself—postponement or

no postponement, you'll be called up sooner or later. And that just means one more revolutionary soldier. But you have other possibilities. With three years Technical School behind you you're good for half the examinations for engineer. What's to prevent you becoming a naval officer? It's a chance in a lifetime. If you don't take it now, when you can get in on the patriotic wave, you'll find it harder later on—they're sure to get stricter. Now you can say, I don't want to study, I want to fight. I've got a postponement, see, but I'm joining up. You can't expect me, with my education, to do soldiering! They'll take you on as a naval cadet, and praise you in the bargain, you'll see. Aren't I right?" And Kudrin winked with a pleased air.

Tisheninov looked at him with ironical regret.

"Sounds all right, but there's one hitch in it: since when does the Navy take on political suspects?"

"Who told you that you are a political suspect?" Kudrin intoned. "Tut, tut, Yegor, you don't know your own worth, man! Just look what they write about you, read this!" he said with evident pleasure, handing him a folded sheet of thick paper.

Tisheninov opened it and was surprised to see in the top left-hand corner the stamp "Office of the St. Petersburg Governor. Department 3." Under the word "Certificate" in large type was a printed form into the text of which his own name was inserted in a clerky hand. Hardly believing his own eyes, he read:

To Whom It May Concern.

This is to certify that *Yegor Alexandrovich Tisheninov*, student of the *Technological Institute*, is not considered politically suspect and no evidence to the contrary during his residence in St. Petersburg is contained in the files of the City Governor's Office.

Issued in accordance with the order of the City Governor on the basis of Articles 197 and 194 of the Military Service Regulations for presentation to the proper authorities for the purpose of enlistment.

Free from stamp-duty as per Clause 5, Par. 62, of the Stamp-Duty Regulations.

General Office Manager: Collegiate Assessor Filipov
Head Clerk: Kostkin.

Tisheninov shook his head and refolded the sheet.

"A mighty powerful document," he said with an ironical smile, "if anyone will believe it."

"Why shouldn't they?" Kudrin continued unruffled. "It's absolutely genuine—official form, heading, signatures. And the reference number's correct too: anyone enquiring will be told, "Yes, we wrote it." The only thing that's not correct is the stamp-duty—Mr. Filipov did collect it into his private pocket—a nice crisp Katenka,* too!" Kudrin laughed. "He's put his price up on account of the war. But the Committee didn't grudge the money. You just think, Yegor, how important it is for you to become a naval officer! You've got to look ahead—the war will make the people see daylight pretty quickly, especially in the Navy. The sailors will be the first to start the show, and they'll need their own officers. We must seize every opportunity to have revolutionaries not only in the mess decks but in the wardrooms as well. Remember what Lenin wrote about the decisions of the Tammerfors Conference of the military organisations?"

"No, I never came across it," Tisheninov confessed. "What did he write?"

"That's too bad. I'd have thought a revolutionary intellectual would know his stuff. Only the other day the Committee men told me: you're a sailor, you ought to know how Lenin tackled the Mensheviks on the question of officers."

"How did he tackle them?" Tisheninov asked impatiently.

Kudrin was silent. He took out a cigarette.

"Sorry, Yegor, but I've been playing the hypocrite," he said, shamefacedly. "Making out as if I remembered it, and it was the very thing you ought to know. I said to myself, once the Committee wanted you to become a naval officer, and even Lenin wrote something on the subject, it was no use me arguing about it. Besides, I know myself how important it is to have you in the fleet, and an educated man like you would get Lenin's line on this. Although I didn't read him myself, I know that he wrote what we think, so it all dovetails. Still, it's interesting to know exactly what ideas of ours he expressed in that article."

Disturbed though he was by the thought of this coming change in his life, Tisheninov could not help laughing.

"In this underground life of ours a man just can't embrace everything. If *we* don't know it—you a naval man, and me a civilian—then let's try between us to get hold of that article somehow. It's interesting to know what makes the St. Petersburg Committee spend money on bribing that Collegiate Assessor of yours for the sake

* A hundred-ruble note.—*Tr.*

of making me a naval officer. Don't misunderstand me—I'm not against it, only I can't make out exactly how you're going to arrange this thing."

Kudrin let out a puff of smoke.

"Very simple. You'll go to Helsingfors—I'll tell you where to. Hand in an application direct to the Staff of the Fleet Commander, it'll be quicker than doing it here through the Naval Chief of Staff, and it'll keep you clear of the local police. The paper's all right, but better not wave it about here. There comes Fedosia," he broke off. "We'll finish this talk later."

Fedosia treated them to boiled potatoes again, and Kudrin, who had to go out to the morning shift, proposed going to bed. Tisheninov, at his own request, had his bed made on the floor next to Gavryusha's cot, but he could not fall asleep. His mind was in a whirl. Kudrin's unexpected proposal (which he perfectly well understood to be that of the St. Petersburg Committee) had unsettled him. He was prepared to continue the dangerous work of political agitator, which he had been doing all the time at various factories. But to become a naval officer? To move into a strange sphere? To play an unfamiliar role, and not for a year or two, but as long as it took for the revolution to triumph? All this needed thinking over.

He sat on the windowsill, gazing out of the open window into the dark hot night. Kudrin had clambered into the high nuptial bed—Fedosia's pride—and was sunk in a heavy, restless sleep. Gavryusha made snuffling little noises in his sleep. Fedosia noiselessly tidied up and prepared everything for the work morning of her husband and son (who was already going to the municipal school); a glimmering vision in the light of the street lamp, she slipped noiselessly into bed beside her husband. Silence fell upon the room, and Tisheninov, sitting on the windowsill, thought over what Kudrin had told him on behalf of the Petersburg Committee of the Bolshevik Party. He had to make his decision—make the decision of a lifetime in a single night. He was at the crossroads, the turning point. One excluded the other. His life was breaking out of its set pattern, and this depended not on him, but on history, which he was making together with the people of his party.

He did not know how long he sat there with knees drawn up to his chin, staring at a single point—the street lamp next to the Narva Arch. From that deep reverie he was recalled by a strange sound, like the creak of a rusty winch. It was Kudrin, gnashing his teeth and moaning in his sleep. Tisheninov wanted to go up and rouse him from some bad dream he was having, but turning his head he

saw Fedosia, with a gesture of infinite tenderness, pass her hand over Kudrin's cheek, murmuring drowsily. Kudrin, with a gusty sigh, muttered something angrily through his teeth, and Fedosia stroked him again. This time Tisheninov distinctly caught the soft words: "Sleep, darling, I'm here. Dreaming of that admiral again? Sleep, dear heart. . . ." Kudrin sighed again, a deep contented sigh like a child's, and everything was quiet again in this workingman's dwelling.

Tisheninov felt a sharp pang of envy. Throughout his short life, he had always been alone, and no one had stroked his cheek like that, no one had murmured those tender words to him. There had been women in his life, all kinds of women, from highbrow undergraduates book-fed on Leonid Andreyev, Schnitzler, and Sologub, to one-ruble prostitutes from the Ekaterininsky Canal, but never had he heard this drowsy feminine word-breath, this motherly comfort, never had he known the secret warmth of Russian womanhood. He even felt somewhat ashamed at having been an involuntary witness to this impulse of a woman's heart, and fearing to hear something still more sacred, he slid off the windowsill and leaned far out of the window, lying on his stomach, as he and Kudrin had done that memorable night when the Guards were passing through the Narva Arch.

It was quiet there now. The armour of the bronze sentinels glinted ominously in the pallid light of the street lamps, and all around lights glimmered sadly in the windows of the low wooden little houses tenanted by the working people; there, too, someone was awake, thinking of the morrow, which would bring war or lost jobs with it. At last, the lights went out, one by one. The Narvskaya Zastava was plunged in a weary unrestful slumber, but Tisheninov lay for a long time on the windowsill, trying to read the future, which so suddenly and strangely was to break up his whole life.

Break? No, hardly that. Kudrin was probably right. Sailors would be called up from the reserves to join their ships from factories, railways and villages, and among them would be many who had learned a thing or two during their "civilian" life. Some of them—men like Kudrin—ready-made revolutionaries. Those returning to the ships would not be browbeaten recruits whose heads could easily be stuffed with fairy-tales about faith-tsar-and-country and about enemies "internal" and "external". Out there, in the ships, the guard would be mustered—not the tsarist guard of the recent brilliant cavalcade that had passed through this triumphal arch, but the guard of the revolution, prepared to come out at the signal of the armed

uprising when the time came. And his place was in the ranks of this guard.

No, this was no break-up of his life. It was its logical continuation, its development in the direction he had long chosen for himself while still at high school. And as he gazed at the blocks of silent houses whose sleeping occupants would be driven tomorrow to the slaughter, Tisheninov realised, perhaps for the first time, who he was himself. With startling clarity he saw himself as a man whose profession was that of struggle, revolution.

With the detachment of a bystander he took a close look at the figure lying on the windowsill—that of a nervous young man of twenty-two, all alone in the world, without a home, without a family, without a secure place in life. That man was now a student and was preparing to become an engineer. He could just as well become a doctor, a teacher, a druggist, or a lawyer—anything but an official!—because all these professions were merely side-lines, so to speak. His chief profession, his real calling, was the revolution. That being the case, there could be no question of any break-up. The revolution was sending him on a new (and probably difficult) job in an unfamiliar naval milieu. It was giving him a new and very difficult assignment pursuing a shrewd and long-range aim—that of becoming a naval officer and remaining a professional revolutionary.

The moment he realised and accepted this with mind and heart, everything became extraordinarily clear and simple, and the thing now was to start on this assignment as quickly as possible.

It was characteristic of Tisheninov that having made his decision he should have thrown himself into its execution with enthusiasm and without delay. First thing in the morning he went to his Institute, where he spent the whole day getting the necessary papers (it being summer time, peace and quiet reigned at the office), and he returned to Kudrin in the evening in high spirits, quite unlike the mood of the evening before.

And again they sat on the windowsill till late into the night, Kudrin, in his usual leisurely discursive manner, initiating him into the semi-underground, semi-legal life of the Russian revolutionaries in Finland. Tisheninov learned that Pyotr Skvortsov, the venerable chronometer instrument-man working for over twenty years in the Tool Shop of the Hydrographic Office of the Russian Imperial Navy, had a daughter named Vera, through whom the St. Petersburg Committee maintained contact with the Bolshevik Five in the *Generalissimo*. Kudrin advised him to find her through Boatswain's Mate

Kashchenko; she would know what ship Kudrin himself would be assigned to. Just now nothing would be sent to her through Tisheninov, who had to be extra careful to start with.

And now he was sitting in the train, looking out of the window at the passing scenery of a strange land, sombre as her brooding forests, hard as the granite of her blue cliffs, incomprehensible as her language—Finland, the duty-free paradise of the St. Petersburg philistine and stone in the sick liver of the twentieth-century Men-shikov; Finland, thorn in the side of the Russian Okhranka and safe refuge of Russian revolutionaries; Finland, the only colony in the whole Russian Empire that miraculously preserved her own face.

Hers was a remarkable lot. Birthplace of a hardworking and unwarlike nation, she was the arena of a fierce seven-century-long struggle between two military powers—the declining Swedish and the rising Russian. And like the ripe fruit of a tree reared by the hard-working grandfather which falls into the idle hands of a careless grandchild, so, by the irony of history, was the conquest of Finland consummated in 1809, during the reign of Alexander I, that “weak and sly ruler, bald-headed fop, enemy of labour, upon whom glory unexpectedly smiled”.*

He would dearly have loved, that despot who played the role of enlightened European, to bring the Finns to their knees, obedient to the tri-coloured stick of all the Russias, to convert this country, won by Suvorov’s pupils, into an ordinary county of Russia’s backwoods! But this was fraught with risk. Napoleon, invested with the halo of the republic’s First Consul and dazzling Europe with the brilliant new spectacle of Emperor of the French, was at the height of his power, and too fresh yet were the memories of Austerlitz and the Peace of Pressburg, which had so easily brought about the downfall of the Holy Roman Empire. The Russian Empire could break up just as easily. The conquered country, therefore, had to be won over by all possible means to serve as a screen against Sweden, where Marshal Bernadotte, Napoleon’s lieutenant, was already sitting in anticipation of the royal throne. Finland’s moneyed men had to be won over by hook or by crook and her politicians seduced; after all, under Swedish rule this newly acquired province had been a semi-independent state with a Diet of its own and had enjoyed certain rights.

And so for the first time in the history of the Russian autocracy that seditious word “constitution” was uttered from the throne. The

* The quotation is from Pushkin.—*Tr.*

august pen, with many a flourish and curlicue, traced the signature "Alexander" on an unheard-of document, which spoke of the necessity of such "an internal structure for Finland as would give her people far greater advantages in union with Russia than those they enjoyed under Swedish rule", for which reason the said people, unlike any of the other peoples of Russia, was granted "political being, in order that it be not considered enslaved to Russia, but joined to her for its own obvious good", wherefore Finland was allowed to preserve "not only her civil, but her political laws".*

Similar, if not more latitudinarian sentiments were expressed by Alexander the First (alias The Blessed) at a session of the Finnish Diet held in Borga. He hastened to do this before the signing of the peace treaty with Sweden, in order to win hearts quickly. But these remained mere words. The granting of the constitution by royal will was not confirmed by any laws, other perhaps than protective duties on the import of raw material for Finland's rising industry, by which means conquest of the influential upper crust in the conquered land was achieved. The Constitution of the Grand Duchy of Finland proved to be something like the mantle of canvas and red calico with tails of black cats used on the stage to represent purple and ermined majesty.

It took practically the whole of the nineteenth century to puzzle out the riddles of that constitution. The game consisted in the Finnish savants trying to put their own construction on the legislative obscurities contained in the Finland Statute, while the Russian authorities had their own interpretations. The Finnish political leaders seriously tried to give effect to the painted lie of Alexander the Blessed, while the tsarist authorities tried to make shift with new and similarly painted royal manifestoes. Only once, after the unfortunate Crimean War, were the tsarist authorities compelled to make certain concessions, when, in 1863, for the first time since the declamation at Borga, the Finnish Diet was convoked, Finnish was recognised as the official language, and Finland was granted the right to have her own currency, her own court of law, and exemption from military service. As a result of all this Alexander II (alias the Emancipator), who, after the lapse of half a century, fulfilled some of the promises made by Alexander I, was gratefully immortalised in a statue fronting the senate house.

Be it as it may, Finland calmly went about her business without

* Rescript to Baron Steingel, dated September 14, 1810. *Collection of Historical Materials From His Imperial Majesty's Chancellery.*

committing any improprieties such as the Polish insurrection, until the end of the century, when her destiny was taken in hand by the new Russian Emperor Nicholas II, who, as we know, started his career with a statement to a zemstvo deputation containing the historic and sobering words about people who entertained futile dreams of reforms. With the help of Pobedonostsev and other faithful pillars of the throne, the royal eyes were opened to the existence within the inherited Empire of a peculiar separate state governed by its own laws, used as a refuge by all kinds of unreliable elements, itself a dangerous hotbed of revolution which (horror of horrors!) was preparing to break away from Russia. It was further revealed and explained that the privileges and liberties granted by his grandfather and ancestors were not binding upon the grandson and offspring, since the previous manifestoes were merely designed to smooth Finnish feeling and not grant any constitution.

And so, exactly ninety years later, in 1899, a new tsarist manifesto was issued explaining what's what and putting all notions in their proper places. Finland was paternally taken to the bosom as one of the borderlands of the Empire. Self-government by the Diet was reduced to naught. Its right to issue its own laws was sharply curtailed. The military service regulations were brought into line with those of Russia. The statute governing the law courts was abrogated. In a word, life in this strange land was remodelled after the time-tested pattern of the Russian backwoods county, a thing which not even his august policemanic majesty, Alexander III (alias the Peacemaker), dared to attempt.

The Finnish intelligentsia were shocked; the semblance of independence which had done duty for a constitution was shattered. Unrest started among the factory workers and resentful farmstead peasants, who now had to give their sons to the Russian army. The wave of protest mounted. Five hundred thousand Finns signed a petition to the Diet, containing the words: "Therefore the Finnish people now feel shaken to the depths of their soul. Accustomed always to rely upon their fundamental laws, which have been repeatedly confirmed by the royal word, the people have lost that peace of mind which comes only from a consciousness of the law's sanctity." Europe, too, was shocked into protest. An international deputation on behalf of a thousand distinguished scientists, men of letters and artists from all over Europe arrived in St. Petersburg. They were not admitted to the royal presence, and the petition they had brought with them was filed away in the archives together with that of the Finnish Diet.

In Helsingfors, Governor-General Bobrikov, invested with extraordinary powers "for safeguarding law and order and the public peace in Finland", developed violent activities. Harsh repressive measures were taken, a rigorous censorship was introduced, and administrative rulings poured in from St. Petersburg which destroyed the last vestiges of Finnish self-government.

The historical farce enacted ninety years before at Borga had now turned into tragedy. The peaceful trading country that was Finland became a hotbed of discontent and unrest, the safe refuge of Russian revolutionaries. A Workers' Party was created in Finland, and student and youth circles arose. And when the revolution of 1905 broke out in Russia, it instantly detonated in Finland like a well-prepared explosive charge that responds to the detonating fuse. The Finnish workers joined the nation-wide strike, a worker's movement sprang up in many towns, and the peasantry stirred. It was like a revival of those remote times, four hundred years ago, when the Sum and Ehm tribes rose against Swedish rule in a bitter spontaneous "cudgel war".

The revolt of the workers frightened the young Finnish bourgeoisie, but they could do nothing to restrain it. *"The Russian revolution, supported by the Finns, compelled the tsar to relax the stranglehold which he had kept on the Finnish people for a number of years. The tsar, who wanted to extend his despotic power over Finland, to whose constitution his ancestors and he himself had taken the oath, was compelled to sanction not only the expulsion of Bobrikov's executioners from Finnish soil and the repeal of his own unlawful ukases, but also the introduction of universal and equal suffrage in Finland."**

In July 1906 Nicholas II was compelled to endorse the new constitution of Finland adopted by the Diet.

Four years later, however, *the Black-Hundred bandits of the Winter Palace and the Octobrist tricksters of the Third Duma have begun a new campaign against Finland. To do away with the constitution that protects the rights of the Finns against the tyranny of the Russian autocrats, to put Finland on a par with the rest of Russia deprived of rights by the exceptional laws—such is the purpose of this crusade. . . . In the person of free and democratic Finland the tsarist government and its associates want to efface the last trace of the popular gains of 1905. The West-European bour-*

* Here and lower down the page italics are a quotation from Lenin's article "The Tsar Against the Finnish People", *Collected Works*, English edition, Vol. 16, pp. 79-81.

geoisie, which had once petitioned the tsar to leave Finland in peace, will not lift a finger to halt the bandits. Only just recently it has been given assurances that the tsar's intentions are honest and "constitutional" by the very people who, at that time, exhorted Europe to condemn the tsar's policy in Finland. Calling themselves "representatives" of the Russian intelligentsia and "representatives of the Russian people", the Cadet leaders have solemnly assured the European bourgeoisie that they, and the Russian people with them, are at one with the tsar. The betrayal was complete. In March 1910 Stolypin was able to get a Bill passed through the Duma which virtually revoked all the rights which the Finnish people had won and simultaneously turned them against the Tsar and his ministers. Even the "Plan of Operations of the Baltic Fleet in the Event of a European War in 1914" anxiously conveyed for the information of staffs and senior naval officers the fact that "the political situation in Finland remains unfavourable. The possibility of an insurrection in Finland during a European war has in no way diminished, and there is reason to assume that it is highly probable. This situation has been complicated recently by contacts between Finnish organisations hostile to us and similar organisations in Estland, which are kindred to the Finns in language and origin".

This was the side of Finland which now revealed her face to Tisheninov. And that, in the eyes of a Bolshevik agitator, was what she was. That was why (incredible though it was under the conditions of the Russian Empire) Party conferences, meetings and rallies could be held here, in Vyborg, and the newspaper *Proletary*, the Central Organ of the Bolshevik Party, could be published. London and Geneva pamphlets, copies of *Iskra* brought from abroad and instructions from Lenin were here placed in reliable hands. Here Lenin himself often sought refuge—in Kuokkala, in Vyborg, in Stirsudden, in Tammerfors, in Abo, in Kokta, in Helsingfors itself and its suburb Ogelby. More than once this austere and honest land saved him from the Okhranka, little suspecting that with this man she was not only saving the revolution but helping to shape the destinies of the planet. Here he crossed the green Baltic wave to foreign exile, the treacherous December ice cracking beneath his fearless tread; but the Baltic did not betray him to the Okhranka or to an icy death beneath its frozen surface.

Thinking of this, Tisheninov no longer gazed at the passing landscape with his former rapt attention. The smooth sheet of water gleamed again on his right, and the brooding coniferous forest stretched away on his left.

The sea and Finland. Two sides of his future life.

He recalled his friends at the Lessner Works, the Bolshevik workmen, the Putilov people he had been formerly associated with, the students of his own party faith. Now he would have to find others—among the sailors. Maybe (one chance in a thousand!) among the officers. He would make friends among the Finns. Staunch, brave men—one had but to recollect nineteen five, the strike at Abo, Helsingfors. He had been a youngster at the time, but his uncle, his mother's brother, a railwayman, had brought stories back with him from Finland, which may possibly have influenced his own life. The future, dark and bright, stood before him, screening the dark and bright woods. Dark—from the uncertainty of how things would turn out. Bright—from the clarity of thought that illumined the future, thought of what and how things had to be done. The dark shaggy forest gave way to sunny clearings. The dark overhanging cliffs on the right—to the bright expanse of sea shining through the forest clearings on the left.

Light and darkness—that was life. Peril and misfortune—that was life. Tsarist prison and revolution—that was life. The only question was, which would win—light or darkness? Prison or freedom? And for that, one could give up everything. One could become an officer. One could don those hateful golden shoulder straps. The important thing was for people—real people!—to understand where the light and where the dark was in a person. When the time came, the light would burst into the open. Watch your step, Yegor. This was not Liteiny Bridge for you. This was not cheap speculation on the *Marseillaise*. Here the score would be in ships. The ships had to be ours. And to achieve this great purpose you would help men in the ships whom you did not know yet. Watch your step, Yegor. Learn to be (no, not to be, but to seem) a different man. Be him right now. You are now a fool-patriot, a rapturous student, who had always been dreaming of the Navy and now wanted to give his life for the glory of it. Say good-bye to your Lessner friends, to the Putilov men, to your Party comrades. Tomorrow you will be an altogether different man. The sea is waiting for you. So is Finland, where you will find new friends.

Oddly enough it was here, in Finland, that his new life had been shaped. The conference of the St. Petersburg Committee, which had started the whole thing, had been held here, in the Finnish city of Tammerfors, of which he had heard nothing. He had not been able to find Lenin's article about it among the comrades he had met.

But Kudrin had spoken to one of the Committee members, and on their last evening together had given Tisheninov the gist of it.

The article in question dealt with work among the officers. Two points of view emerged at two conferences—that of October and November. The Menshevik resolution called for serious attention to be given to *all* the officers, in order to make conscious adherents of the Social-Democratic Party out of them, and regarded them as the future technical leaders of the armed uprising. The Bolshevik resolution, on the contrary, maintained that the bulk of the officers, owing to their class and social make-up, played a reactionary role even in the bourgeois-democratic revolution (the Conference was being held in November 1906, that is, under the impact of the 1905 revolution), and that it could only be a question of enlisting individual officers from among opposition-minded groups.

Lenin strongly supported the Bolshevik resolution, scathingly ridiculed the Mensheviks (who were afraid to mention the class connection between the officers and the bourgeoisie) for their philistine way of thinking, and repeated in his article the last point of the Bolshevik resolution, which Kudrin tried to retell to Tisheninov as accurately as he could, namely, that the opposition-minded officers should be used for information purposes, but that only individual officers from among them, and not just all and anybody, should be drawn into the Bolshevik fighting organisations.

Only when Kudrin had told him this, did the train of thought of the St. Petersburg Committee comrades become clear to Tisheninov. Naturally, in addition to seeking these “individual officers”, every opportunity had to be made use of to have *their own* officers in the ships. And obviously, this eve-of-war turmoil offered opportunities for doing what could not even be dreamt of in peace-time, namely, making a naval officer out of a professional revolutionary, capable of carrying on militant Party work among the sailors, and, in the event of an armed uprising, leading them into battle for the revolution. The idea was sound and farsighted. If there was one such officer in every ship of the Baltic Fleet, all of them aware of each other's existence. . . .

It was with heightened curiosity that his eyes now travelled to the young sailor sitting opposite—a first-year man, by the looks of it. Get him to talk? It would be interesting to know what was on the minds of these youngsters now going through the befuddling process of the tsarist service. True, this sailor looked a bit unusual: he was too spruce and smart to be from the country, and nor did he look like a factory-hand for that matter. Under the berth next to

his feet stood a box of highly polished Karelian birch, an elegant, expensive looking thing. A strange sailor.

Tisheninov, of course, was not to know that such boxes were the essential attributes of cadets and midshipmen of the Naval College, during exercise cruises. It was considered good form to take such boxes, traditionally known as sea chests, on board the ship instead of ordinary suitcases or dressing-cases for keeping one's notebooks, text-books, stationery, shaving and toilet kit, forbidden silk socks and sundry other paraphernalia. There was a profound meaning in this: men lived aboard a ship in a sailory fashion, and so one had to keep one's personal belongings in a sea chest the way sailors did.

It so happened that sea chests had long since become an object of fierce competition. Two opposing trends crystallised. One claimed that the cruder and cheaper the box was and the closer its resemblance to the sea chest of a first-year sailor, the better did it express your true naval chic. The adherents of the second trend, on the contrary, held that the Naval College was called upon to ennoble the old naval traditions, and therefore mahogany, walnut or rosewood could be used for sea chests; and so we find the scions of noble families lugging aboard the ship their grandfather's or grandmother's caskets, which had once housed letters and keepsakes.

In this long-standing dispute Yuri fell between two stools. Honestly speaking, he would dearly have loved to flaunt a family casket with monograms and inlaid work, but he had none; and so the year before he fell out of one extreme into another—he went to the Apraxin Market and bought himself a hideous construction, something in the nature of a baby's coffin—a badly stained fir-wood chest full of knots and scars, with a leather-hinged lid and a lock staple made of ordinary nails. This chest was unanimously acclaimed by the adherents of the first trend as the finest in the company.

Baron Medem, however, had a sea chest—a dainty bonbonniere of a chest in dark mahogany, which seemed to hold that deep mellow glow for which the *Aurora's* boat was so famous—which spoilt the pleasure of the whole cruise for him. Yuri swore to go one better than the blond baron, and in January he started to prowl around the antique shops. At last fortune smiled upon him: on the very eve of their cruise he managed to pick up a splendid casket of Karelian birch, which, by a happy turn of fate, had the monogram "A. L." laid out in pieces of wood on the lid. Yuri unhesitatingly paid thirty-five rubles for it (a sum exceeding his whole monthly budget), thus scoring another, this time aristocratic, success. The casket passed off easily as a family relic (his grandfather's name

being Alexei Livitin) and even Count Bobrinsky, passing his long fingers over the lid's smooth surface, said condescendingly: "Charming thing. Say what you like, but the old folks had good taste."

Yuri experienced all the inconveniences of this "family relic" the day before, when running down the gangway. He discovered that the thing had to be carried under his arm (the famous sea chest was carried aboard the *Aurora* for him by the college orderly for a twenty-kopek tip). Realising this inconvenience, Yuri had wheedled several feet of white six-stranded rope out of Krasnov, who had the Watch, and tied it round the accursed relic. In the railway coach he found that it refused to go on the luggage rack, not having been designed for that purpose by his non-existent ancestors. Yuri, cursing inwardly, had to push the blessed thing under the berth, next to his feet. The shops sold such convenient flat suitcases! He would look a sight, stepping aboard the destroyer at Abo with this "sea chest" of his.

Tisheninov looked up again and closely studied this strange sailor. Whether he felt this prying gaze upon him, or because his legs had grown numb, Yuri stirred and turned round in his sleep, revealing on his left shoulder the gleam of golden tabs, and between them, a dainty golden anchor.

Scant as Tisheninov's knowledge of military, and still less, of naval uniform was, he realised that this was a youth of noble blood, a midshipman of the Naval College (the sonorous words had impressed themselves on Tisheninov's mind ever since studying the syllabuses of the Naval College and the Marine Engineering School, which he had bought in order to find out what examinations he would have to pass for promotion from naval cadet to engineer sub-lieutenant). The sudden transformation of a first-year sailor into a brilliant midshipman amused him and brought a broad smile to his face.

It was this smile that Yuri saw, when, after a futile attempt to find support for his drooping head in place of the tarpaulin-clad Finnish shoulder, he opened his eyes. He saw it all in a flash: the shame of being caught out in a third-class coach, discovered by that student in the baggy trousers; in a moment all these stolid Finns would be laughing at him, and so would that straw-haired girl with the basket. He felt the colour flooding his face. What the devil made him come out with that travel voucher at the booking office!

He carried off the situation with a show of dignity, however. He simulated a yawn, stretched himself and rubbed his cheeks with the

air of a tired man who had managed to have a snooze after all, then looked round and suddenly drew his legs up with exaggerated haste.

"I'm sorry," he said, smiling (what that smile cost him!). "I'm afraid my legs were in your way. I'm not used to sleeping in a railway coach in such a position, you know."

"That's all right, Midshipman. I woke up myself, you didn't wake me," Tisheninov said, smiling too. Yuri turned cold. "Midshipman!" So he knew. . . .

He rallied his forces into another suppressed yawn.

"I was so tired, didn't care really. Sudden notice to report for active duty (Yuri dragged these words out significantly). Night time. No tickets. Just jumped into the first coach. . . ."

He spread his hands deprecatingly, then suddenly it struck him with horror that he was doing a Mr. Jingle act—the same lying and bragging, even the same jerky speech full of hints and suggestions. But the student did not seem to have noticed anything. On the contrary, he was showing an obvious interest.

"Active duty? But aren't you at College? What about your training?"

Yuri dismissed the question with an airy gesture.

"Training? In war-time?" he said significantly. "You students must find this difficult to understand, your's is a different mentality. But a fighting man, a naval man still more—how can you expect him to sit ashore while the ships are fighting out there? I sent a wire, and now I'm on my way out."

"I can understand it very well," Tisheninov said, removing the smile. "On the contrary, I even envy you. To be in the thick of it from the very start—Pardon me, but in what capacity are you joining the ship?"

Yuri smiled ruefully.

"Who cares? An ordinary gunner, or signalman, to begin with. Then we'll see. It's all in the hands of the gods."

He made a dramatic gesture and fell silent. Yuri was no longer able to control himself. Some force outside of him was making him utter all this drivel, and he felt that if he meandered on in this vein he would talk himself into a daze. He only hoped to God he would never have occasion to meet this poor specimen of a student again. What the devil had made him board this coach! But for him everything would have passed off splendidly. That offensive smile, that ironical look! The fellow ought to be taught a lesson, given to understand that a midshipman of the Naval College on a deed of valour stood above such things as third-class travel. . . .

But Yuri's tongue had already run away with him to the rescue of his injured pride, and he could do nothing to stop it. Luckily, his companion checked the effusion with a sudden question.

"Tell me, perhaps I should join as an ordinary stoker or mechanic too?"

Yuri stared at him in surprise.

"You? Pardon me, but I don't understand."

Tisheninov chuckled good-naturedly.

"Quite simple. I'm joining the Navy, too, as a volunteer. Not waiting to be called up. It's such a time, you know."

"I see," Yuri muttered, "but why the Navy?"

"Well, it's rather difficult to explain to a stranger. I've been dreaming of the Navy ever since a child, but you know what the enrolment rules are in your Naval College."

"I understand," Yuri threw in with hasty condescension.

"So I tried the Marine Engineering School, but I failed to pass the competitive examinations and entered the Technological Institute instead. And now I've been advised to hand in an application to the Commander-in-Chief to be enlisted as naval cadet. I'll pass the examinations all right. But I was thinking, maybe it would be simpler to join up as a sailor, like you, and then, if I have it in me to perform some act of heroism. . . ."

Yuri looked sympathetic and maintained a significant pause.

"Well, I've sure opened my mouth pretty wide," Tisheninov said to himself in turn. "Never mind, he may be able to give me a hint. I've got to explain something at the Admiral's staff."

Yuri, meanwhile, was digesting what his companion had just told him. What a nuisance the fellow was! On the one hand, it was a remarkable fact—he would have to tell Nikolai about it—even students were volunteering for the war these days. On the other hand, what could he tell him? After the yarns he'd been spinning?

But Tisheninov helped him out.

"I was thinking the right thing would be to join up as a naval cadet. I have some knowledge, and could pass the examinations for engineer. As for acts of heroism, it isn't everybody who can do it. Do you think they'll accept me?"

Yuri suddenly felt magnanimous. That stupid incident about the third class was over and done with, the student was obviously a decent chap and something had to be done for him.

"I tell you what," he said majestically, "you go about it in your own way, and if there's any hitch, let my brother know. By the way, let's get to know each other. There's an English custom of

introducing oneself at parting, and Helsingfors is already near. I'm Midshipman Yuri Livitin."

"Yegor Tisheninov, for the time being a student," Tisheninov smiled.

They shook hands ceremoniously, little suspecting how near they had been to meeting each other in a different capacity a few days ago at the Liteiny flat and that fate would throw them together again in the distant future.

"Well then, Mr. Tisheninov, if you have any trouble, look up my brother—Nikolai Livitin, battleship *Generalissimo Count Suworov*—I'll tell him about you. As for myself, I don't know where I'll be. I hope we'll be meeting again."

They took leave of each other with a bow, for the train had begun to slow down. Yuri, now unashamedly (the honour of the College had been upheld), reached for his sword, threw his pea jacket over his arm, picked up his box and went out onto the coach platform. Tisheninov followed him with his eyes, then suddenly reminding himself, he pulled out his pocket diary and wrote down what Yuri had told him.

Contacts had to be established from the very first day.

CHAPTER 14

Yuri left the coach in an elated, excited mood. How splendidly he had carried things off with that student. He could congratulate himself on his quick wits, which had turned the shame of being discovered in a third-class coach into a readiness to sacrifice his all in the name of duty. Everything now seemed splendid, wonderful, easy of attainment, the future remarkably clear. Within the hour he would see Nikolai; the latter would understand him, of course, and tomorrow, perhaps, life would reveal itself in a new, beautiful, if stern, aspect. Midshipman Livitin would become an Able Seaman, and in six months or a year a sub-lieutenant who had won his battle laurels.

The South Harbour was not very far off, and Yuri usually walked there. But that easy graceful walk which he was fond of showing off and which fitted in so admirably with his present mood was now impossible, because of the box he was carrying. To salute passing officers he was obliged to hold it in his left hand together with his pea jacket and so was unable to keep his fingers on his sword, which kept hitting his anklebone, like an angry reminder of how unbecoming

it was for a gentleman of quality to carry cumbrous burdens. And no sooner had he turned off the square into the street leading to the Esplanade than he regretted not having taken a taxi at the railway station.

This could be mended, however. All he had to do was to step into the nearest shop and ring up one of the two numbers which every self-respecting naval officer remembered and was still capable of uttering, no matter what degree of saturation he had reached after making a night of it. Yuri remembered both these telephone numbers—*tjugofem-tjugofem* and *sjuttifem-sjuttifem** which he had often had occasion to use, and one of the few Swedish phrases he knew: "*Varsågod, skicka en automobil Mundgatan.... Tack så mycket!*"**

The sword kept slapping at his anklebone, and Yuri swore and gave in at last. A taxi wouldn't cost much, in any case. He pushed the first plate-glass door he came across and walked into a small shop.

A pleasant smell of well-dressed leather struck his nostrils. A small army of suitcases was marshalled on the shelves—yellow, brown, and shiny black ones, made of leather and fibre, strapped or metal-bound, huge and tiny, potbellied and flat. Lower down lay a pile of ladies' handbags, portfolios, dressing-cases and wallets. A pretty flaxen-haired fröken stood listlessly watching two army sub-alterns—one pink-faced like a girl, the other rather whiskery for his age—selecting dressing-cases and examining scent bottles, soap-holders and shaving-sets. Yuri saluted perfunctorily and the others responded smartly with a click of heels on brand-new shining high-boots. Their officers' uniforms stiff with newness, their close-cropped napes that looked almost naked under uncreased caps, the exaggerated smartness of their military bearing and clicking of heels—by all these signs Yuri recognised the recently promoted officers of the Pavlovsky Regiment Pakhomov had spoken about. So they had come down here to fight! Here, in Finland, where there were no land battles to be fought! And the first thing they do is to run and buy themselves dressing-cases! Yuri glanced at the counter with an ironical smile.

The Pavlons gave tit for tat. The one with the moustaches said something to his companion in a low tone and both of them cast amused glances at Yuri's rope-bound casket. Yuri flushed. He suddenly saw himself through their eyes—a brilliant midshipman

* 25-25 and 75-75 (Swedish).

** Please send me a car, No. 7, Mundgatan. Thank you.

lugging along a box tied up with string (that, probably, was how they regarded the excellent six-stranded line, soft and bleached, which could only gladden the naval eye).

Punctured vanity befuddled his brain, and instead of asking to use the telephone, he put his casket down on the counter, ran his eye over the shelves and touched his cap again, saying: "Pardon me . . . *Fröken, giv mig en lilla koffert. Den, gul, lilla varsågod. . .*."*

Yuri knew few Swedish words, but even these few, uttered with fluent aplomb, were enough to impress the Pavlons. The girl smiled, wheeled up a stepladder and mounted three steps, showing a pair of strong rounded calves in black stockings, which immediately attracted the attention of the two officers.

The decision to buy a suitcase was made on the spur of the moment, but Yuri, if anything, was grateful to the Pavlons. This was as good a time as any to part with that silly box of his. What was good in the *Aurora* would look silly in a fighting ship. A small suitcase would do, one for six or seven rubles at the most. He would leave it at the shop, and tomorrow Sasha could call for it and bring it down to the flat.

The girl got down the suitcase, put it on the counter and smiled again.

"This is a verra good zing, Prooshun lezcr, Ingleesh make," she rattled off, rolling her "r's" harshly, and brushing the suitcase with a feather-duster. "*Varsågod. . . Fyrtitre mark. . .* Forrtty tree markkas. . ."

Forty-three markkas! Yuri gasped inwardly. Sixteen odd rubles—more than half of what he had in his pocket! But it was too late now to retreat; he couldn't very well leave the place after he had selected the thing and with those two Pavlons looking on. It was an excellent suitcase though—an elegant solid thing of hard thick leather the colour of egg-yolk with a gleaming lock and a little frame for the owner's address and with keys hanging from a corded little strap.

"Fine, I'll have that, tack så mycket," he said as carelessly as he could, and untied his "sea chest", disclosing a cross barred shirt and socks (thank goodness they were silk ones and happened to be on top). The girl turned away shyly on seeing the underwear, for which Yuri thanked her mentally. Using the lid as a screen he quickly tossed his midshipman's chattels into the suitcase, little caring to flaunt them in the eyes of that golden-haired Undine, and still less

* *Fröken*, give me a small suitcase. That little yellow one over there, please.

of those Pavlons. Then he placed on the counter Pakhomov's ten-ruble note and two green ones, and, after a glance at the exchange-rates table lying near the till, added a twenty-kopek coin. Meanwhile the Undine had got out a sheet of brownpaper and reached for the empty casket.

"A beautiful zing," she murmured, caressing the smooth lustrous lid with her fingers. "R-real Karrelian birch. . . ."

The two Pavlons looked at Yuri again with what he thought a mocking smile. Sneering, eh? All right, you just watch. I'll show you what a midshipman of the Naval College is.

He locked the suitcase, dropped the keys into his pocket and looked at the girl with a faint smile.

"Do you like it?"

"Oh, yes. Such a beautiful zing."

"Then keep it."

All three of them—the Undine and the officers—stared at him in amazement.

"Take it," Yuri repeated, revelling in the scene. "*Varsågod, tag hans—*" and words failing him, he finished the sentence in English—"for remembrance."

Undine, startled, pushed the casket away.

"No, no!" she exclaimed, shaking her head. "Zis is an expensive zing, it costs more zan the suitcase."

"More's the pity if it gets burned or goes to the bottom," Yuri said with a shrug, entering fully into the role heroic and enjoying a side glimpse of the listening Pavlons. "I'll leave it somewhere in any case, I can't very well take it with me into action. Didn't you hear—war is starting? Take it as keepsake, but"—here he raised his voice for the benefit of the army men—"but promise me you will keep love letters in it, as my grandmother did. "*Stor lycka, adjö. . . .*"*

He saluted (her, not the Pavlons) and without waiting for a reply, he deftly caught his pea jacket under his arm, picked the suitcase up by its handle with three fingers to leave the others free for holding his sword, and swam out of the shop with his peculiar gait. Grandmother, or grandfather—who cared! The thing was he had left the Pavlons in there open-mouthed, struck all of a heap!

He walked down the sun-flooded Esplanade with a light confident tread, keeping his right disengaged hand away from his body and swinging it round smoothly at every step. He walked with easy

* Good luck and good-bye.

grace, his sword at last subdued, his eye gliding absently over the faces of the passers-by and over the shop-windows, his suitcase shining with a yolk-yellow comforting gleam, and life spreading before him in neat well-laid cubes of dark-grey granite on which his heels clicked out their gay song. Today or tomorrow everything would be decided, and some day he alone of all the graduates would don his sub-lieutenant's insignia won in the flame and smoke of battle. . . .

Yuri felt with pleasure that he was "off" again. He used this word to denote the condition when that other Yuri erupted from the depths of his being—that sharp, witty, self-possessed Yuri he so much admired and whom he implored: "Stay as you are just a little longer, do. Say something clever again, bowl them all over!" True, in such cases he always felt a bit nervous, curious to know how this would end, and where this second self of his, acting on its own, as it were, would land him. Afterwards, in a penitent mood, he would try to recollect all the things he had said and done while in that delightful state of assurance and successfulness. There would seem to be two Yuri Livitins leading separate existences: one, a dull, shy person with little experience of life and apparently none too clever; the other—bold, brilliant, theatrically vivid, winning all hearts, self-assured and successful.

He once confided these thoughts to Nikolai, who laughed and said, "Quite right, Yuri. We're all actors strutting God's stage. Between you and me, I too admire that Nikolai Livitin who is capable of springing a surprise when in a state of absolute sobriety. Having such a double is a bit troublesome, but pleasant, even if he does act silly at times."

Now, when he had somewhat cooled off, Yuri realised that other self of his had overdone it a bit. Throwing money about like that—after all, the casket had cost him thirty-five rubles—just for the sake of snubbing those officers, was stupid; besides, he could have bought a cheaper suitcase. One had to pay for one's pleasures, though. What's more, those Pavlons were sure to tell their Sveaborg ladies about it, and they in turn would spread the legend of the generous midshipman all over Helsingfors; one day the story would roll back to him and he would smile with the air a man who knew a thing or two about it.

Helsingfors, as usual, was quiet, neat and clean. Oddly enough, there was no sign of tension or alarm in its streets, and the morning's market trade in Torgets Plats at the end of the Esplanade followed its usual unhurried course. The noisy throng of dockyard carts on

the quayside of South Harbour beyond the market and the complete absence of the trim-looking destroyers that usually stood here moored with sterns to the Esplanade were the only evidence of the grim and urgent preparations that were going on out there in the harbour. At the quayside, where only smart steam launches and motorboats used to come alongside, were now huddled a motley collection of clumsy work boats into which sailors were loading cases, bales and sacks from off the carts. It was impossible amid all this bustle to find any boat off the *Generalissimo*, and Yuri was obliged to ask the quayman for information. Here he learned that communication between the battleships and the shore had been suspended since yesterday, but a telephone message from the Communications Service Tower said that a boat was expected in from the *Generalissimo* at eleven thirty to pick up some officers.

This delay puzzled Yuri, but not for long; in the mood he was in decisions came quickly and easily. What if he went to Mundgatan? True, it was rather early, but by the time Sasha served him breakfast, Irina would be up and he would learn all the news about Nikolai from her. Besides, Nikolai would be pleased to receive fresh greetings, and maybe a note, from Irina.

He left his suitcase and pea jacket in the duty-room and went towards the bridge leading to Skatudden—a peninsula, where the dockyard, the naval barracks, warehouses, and workshops were located, and where the naval families lived in the quiet streets adjoining the Russian church. It was there, in a modern comfortable house, that Irina had a small flat, which she called her "*lilla hytte*".* It consisted of a dining-room, a small sitting-room, a bedroom and a room for Sasha, who always accompanied her mistress on her visits from St. Petersburg. Yuri had never been there without his brother, and he felt rather awkward about this morning intrusion. On second thoughts—this was war-time, who cared for the conventions.

Nevertheless, on reaching the second floor, he lingered irresolutely before the door with his eye on the white button. Maybe he should have phoned first before calling?

It so happened that in the retinue of the "marble widow" Yuri found himself cast in the role of First Page and youthful adorant. Flattering though this relationship was, it was hardly of the kind to justify such an early morning call. But then this whole queer affair of their deferred wedding was as far removed from the

* Little hut (*Swedish*).

customary notion of Family as was Irina herself from that of Spouse. Yuri was no fool. He had long suspected and lately even begun to notice a state of precarious inequality in the relations between Nikolai and Irina, which threatened to break down at any moment. Yet he had nothing against such an advantageous marriage. The "marble widow's" not inconsiderable fortune, her position in influential Helsingfors society, her connections in St. Petersburg, the lustre she was able to shed around her, and this mystique of self-confident beauty, which had been keeping Nikolai this second year in a state of ecstatic, jealous and agonising rapture—all this justified such a marriage, and Yuri mentally hastened it.

But while thinking of it, he could not see himself visiting Irina's St. Petersburg nook in Moika during leave of absence—that flat with its sumptuous drawing-room, its dimly lit Turkish room behung with rugs and furnished with low couches, where he had spent three or four evenings, all of them replicas of the boisterous evenings at the *lilla hytte*. And no matter how much the Izvekovs' "backyard" flat shocked him, he felt more at home there than he did here. Irina, for all her brilliancy, remained a stranger to him. There had long been established between them that light bantering tone of amorous respect on one side, and indulgent coquetry on the other, which makes for conventional ease without demanding candour. Alone with Irina he always felt uncomfortable and found conversation difficult, and it would never have entered his mind, of course, to take her into his confidence. In raising his hand now to the bell, he was about to change his mind, but recollected that tomorrow, perhaps, he would be in action and that Nikolai, too, was obviously courting danger. These were unusual circumstances, calling for unusual behaviour. Besides, his imagination was still riding cap-a-pie, and he pictured to himself with pleasure how nonchalantly he would tell Irina about Abo and the destroyers, saying that he had come to say good-bye before going into battle. The thought decided him, and he rang the bell.

It was nevertheless a timid, stuttering sort of ring. The door was opened immediately and Sasha appeared, not in her usual starched primness, but in blue overalls, flushed, worried-looking and astonishingly pretty.

"Is Irina Alexandrovna asleep?" Yuri asked in a whisper, but Sasha answered in a loud voice:

"Good-morning, Yuri Petrovich! The mistress is out. Did you have lunch?"

"Good-morning, Sasha. Where is she?"

"At Drumsö. She went to dinner yesterday at Anastasia Petrovna's and hasn't come back yet. But come right in," Sasha smiled, shutting the door behind him. "I'll make you some coffee in a minute."

At Drumsö? Yesterday? He felt a pang for Nikolai. Making a night of it at such a time! But then what could you expect of Anastasia Petrovna, the *bête noir* of this house! All she knows is high jinks and love affairs. What a time she's found for them!

Anastasia Petrovna, the wife of a rich timber-merchant, an elderly Russified Swede (whom Yuri had never once seen), was a striking and very fast young Helsingfors lady, Irina's friend and confidante. She often visited Irina in St. Petersburg, and still more often here, in Helsingfors, whence she bore her off, even in winter, to her villa on Drumsö Island, where Nikolai was obliged to join them in their picnic, skiing, yachting or ice-boating parties, and lose sight of Irina, who was surrounded by a noisy crowd of admirers—mostly naval and fortress officers. Unlike Nikolai, who had to put up with Anastasia's escapades and pretend to enter into the spirit of them, Yuri simply could not stand this *bête noire*. Her appearance at the Mundgatan flat or meeting her at a friend's place meant that the evening would end up with a blow-out at one of those restaurants where Yuri dare not be seen even in the company of an officer-brother, and the evening would peter out for him at some silly cinema or in an early bed in Nikolai's room, which he rented nearby, in Skatudden.

"Ah, well, Sasha, I don't mind a cup of coffee," he sighed, giving up his sword-belt and sword to her. "I've got two hours to kill."

Suddenly she threw him a swift smile.

"Then you can help me with all those bottles—you'll be drinking them, not me," she said with unaccustomed familiarity, pointing to some cases standing in the hall.

Yuri gave a whistle.

"My goodness, you've got a regular wine cellar there! What are you going to do with it?"

Sasha laughed.

"We're putting in a supply. You'll be grateful when winter comes. They say there won't be any more wine. War! All day yesterday the mistress went shopping with Anastasia Petrovna." She opened the door into the kitchen—a shining palace of tiled walls and copper saucupans. "Here's a hammer and pincers, unpack the bottles and I'll put them away in the cupboards."

"Right-o," Yuri said, tossing his cap onto the little table before the mirror. "A bunkering arrangement, eh? But mind you don't

lag. All hands on deck for loading fizz!" he shouted boatswain-like, bending over one of the cases.

"Those two cases on the left are not to be touched, they're going to St. Petersburg," Sasha warned him, throwing open the doors of the cupboards. "Take them as they come, I'll sort them out afterwards."

The work turned out to be unexpectedly interesting and instructive. The cases contained brands of wines Yuri had never set eyes on, leave alone tasted, the bottles themselves being of all shapes and sizes: quaint liqueur bottles luminous with green chartreuse, aglow with flaming abricotine, or hiding their yellow sinful glow under the black surplice of the Benedictine monk; girlishly slender bottles of Johannisberger and Moselle; corpulent champagnes, silver-necked and beribboned; square bottles of Dutch gin and dapper arrogant cognacs, proudly advertising their age; bottles of French red wines, homely and amiable, and French white wines in clear dainty bottles with poetic names; Smirnov vodka in bottles pellucid as a teardrop with the double-headed eagle and the legend "By Appointment to His Majesty the Tsar" on the label; Jamaica rum with the head of a Negro, and Scotch whisky with a white horse; golden Hungarian Tokays with long necks; Spanish sherries and English ports; black, fat-bellied bemedalled bottles of the famous Malaga, Stanyukovich's admirals were fond of sipping. A world of fastidious taste and time-honoured traditions of refined cuisine, where every dish had its appropriate wine and every wine its appropriate glass, not to mention appropriate time and conversation, a world of sumptuous living and gormandise, a direct descendant of the feasts of Rome and the magnificent festivities of Versailles—a new wonderful world was revealed to him in this exhibition of wines, created not for crude intoxication but for sheer enjoyment. He avidly memorised the names, labels, and shapes of the bottles to be able afterwards to cut a dash at table by letting fall a phrase such as "my favourite Pontet-Canet" or "inimitable Frapain, king of cognacs" or "pardon me, but I drink only Cliquot demisec", even if it meant watching others sipping with relish Rederer or the Russian Abrau-Durso, both of them not bad wines really, albeit not up to snob standard.

The selection of wines surprised him, and as he handed up to Sasha an outlandish bottle of Chianti built up in straw, he asked whether the ladies had made up this collection on their own. Sasha told him that the list of wines had been made the day before by Lieutenant-Colonel Rogul, who had brought the news that the wine trade was going to be closed down, and that the same gentleman

had sent down one case (the one containing the cognacs, rum and whisky) himself the same evening, when Irina had left the house.

Yuri made a wry face when he heard the name. The Colonel, a fat stupid man with pots of money, a friend of Irina's late husband—an artillery captain—was a frequent visitor at this house. He came here, to *lilla hytte*, whenever it pleased him, got the whole company to go off to a restaurant or "made whoopee" right there on the spot, was an unfailing participant in all the revels on Drumsö and called himself the guardian of the "marble widow". It was clear to everybody that the man was just a pestiferous nuisance, that his half-jocular, half-serious courting of Irina would lead to nothing, and it roused no jealousy even in Nikolai, but Yuri found him just as repellent as Anastasia—exactly why, he could not say. One reason perhaps was because he composed disgustingly vulgar romances, which found a ready publisher in St. Petersburg in the firm of N. Dawinhoff, the famous peddler of tawdry music.

The unpleasant after-taste of Sasha's revelation quickly disappeared, however. Yuri recovered his good spirits and began to crack jokes—within the range of Sasha's sense of humour—and even to play the clown. In handing up the bottles to her he imitated a restaurant waiter, a drunk, and Colonel Rogul himself. Sasha shot swift saucy glances at him with growing interest, gave snorts of laughter, and finally said, dragging out her words:

"So that's what you're like. . . ."

"Like what?" Yuri looked up at her; she was standing on a stool, taking the last bottle from him and placing it on the top shelf.

"Well, a jolly sort, I mean. Interesting."

"And so I am!" Yuri laughed.

"Tell me another one. You always come here sort of stiff and starched, as if you were doing an act or were afraid of something. You're sort of all tied up."

Yuri raised his eyebrows in surprise—how true this was! That was how he usually felt in this house, and not only when the "marble widow's" regular retinue assembled, including such solid figures as post captains, brilliant first lieutenants, "First Class imbecile" Lieutenant Count Heiden off the destroyer *Voiskovoi*, or young Swedes and as young officials of the Governor-General's office from the retinue of Anastasia Petrovna. Even on those rare occasions when only the three of them were together, Yuri sat between Irina and Nikolai exactly as Sasha had described it—sort of tied up. How clever of her to have noticed it! He looked up at her with interest.

"So that's what *you* are like?" he intoned.

Sasha answered him with a look in which there was the ghost of an expectant, provocative smile.

"Like what?"

"Observant. It was very clever of you to notice that 'tied-up' feeling."

"I notice many things, but there's little that I can say. Will you help me down, I've put them all way," she said, bending down and holding both hands out to him with the same enigmatic look in her eyes he was unable to fathom. She seemed to be expecting something of him. But what? Perhaps he was missing a good opportunity, and ought to simply put his arm around her waist and lift her off the stool. It would be an involuntary embrace, as it were, and then. . . .

But the thought of his recent fiasco with Natasha still rankled. True, this was quite different; the attack was coming from the other side, if he was at all able to read Sasha's glance. And what a pretty thing she was, so slim and dainty, nothing like that calf Natasha. You'd never say she was a simple parlourmaid. She had the grace of a Frenchwoman. But the devil knew those parlourmaids, there might be a row, and Irina would get to know of it, and Nikolai. . . .

He stepped back a pace and held out his hand. Sasha leaned on it lightly and sprang down, then patted her hair with a cool gesture as if she had not expected anything else.

Yuri congratulated himself on his restraint.

"I'll go and wash my hands, they're all messy from your bottles," he said, going out into the hall.

"Go into the bathroom, the geyser's on, you can take a shower," Sasha called out after him.

"Good idea!" Yuri said. A hot shower after that stupid night in the railway carriage was the very thing he wanted. He had never been in that bathroom. In these new comfortable Helsingfors houses visitors were able to wash their hands in the lavatory where a hand-basin was installed.

He opened the low door and stopped in his tracks.

The bathroom was sunk in an eerie greenish half-light, amid which the nickel-plated taps glinted mysteriously and the glimmering mirrors reflected the pale gleam of the fan-light in the darkened hall. A strong smell of familiar scent filled the small room, and it seemed as if, somewhere in this submarine fairy kingdom, was Irina herself. Her presence was so palpable that in groping along the wall for the switch and touching something soft and fluffy, Yuri snatched his hand away.

A soft brilliant light flowed from the walls and ceiling, and the greenish half-light was explained: the large hand-bowl, the three steps leading up to the bath, the bath itself, like a solemn altar, and the walls—all were made of green faience or faced with green tiles; even the bath-mat on the floor was the colour of sea water. The great oval mirror over the bath and a smaller one over the wash-basin reflecting the walls looked green too, and only the bathrobe hanging by the door, which Yuri had touched in his search for the switch, made a vivid splash of white.

Stunned and embarrassed, Yuri looked round with curiosity at this temple of a strange religion—that of a woman's worship of her own beauty. A multitude of scent bottles, jars, tubes, brushes, nail-files, combs, and sponges—from tiny ones to gigantic specimens, which hung over the bath with regal dignity—facecreams, scissors, tweezers, all kinds of strange electrical appliances designed for massaging or inhalation, various glass and rubber apparatus, pitchers, bowls large and small, sprays in coloured nets, fluffy towels, napkins, a snow-white bathrobe that seemed to preserve the touch of silky skin, the all-pervading alluring smell of perfumes whose names were unknown even to Nikolai—all this revealed Irina to him in a new unexpected light.

Yuri surveyed this sanctuary of the feminine cult and tried to find some justification for it. Every beautiful woman, of course, needed a temple of hygiene, but what he saw here was disconcerting and filled him with doubt. It looked to him very much like a carefully equipped laboratory designed not so much for the purpose of hygiene as for that of cultivating and sustaining the mighty power of feminine beauty. This green perfumed witchery sent his thoughts wandering among sensuous paths of secret delight, and his heart beat faster as he glimpsed in the pale depths of the mirrors the vision of a lovely naked body, slender and seductive, lost in rapturous admiration of its own reflected image.

And suddenly it struck him that it was perhaps this beautiful, well-cared-for body, inflamed with love of itself and inflaming love in others, this body with all its desires, demands and caprices, that was the true essence of Irina's life. And this woman was to become his brother's wife.

The thought was startling. Those vague indemonstrable conjectures which he had always tried to thrust behind him now acquired an unexpected clarity. Those perpetual carousals in the restaurants, that noisy retinue of admirers—in Helsingfors one, in St. Petersburg another—the case of wine which Colonel Rogul sent down as if it

were his own home, the inseparable friendship of that frankly dissolute *bête noire*, the frivolous and cruel departure with her to Drumsö, and finally, this amazing bathroom. Either Yuri was seeing things that were not, or Nikolai was blind: Irina was his dream girl, the very meaning of life, his "earthly god" as they called her in the wardroom. But to barter what was probably her last meeting with Nikolai for a country picnic? It was terrible!

His recent high spirits vanished as if they had never been. In the back of his mind lurked the bitter thought that the woman who was enshrined in Nikolai's heart was not the ideal of womanhood he believed her to be. One thing at least was clear to Yuri now—the home, the family, which he had unconsciously been yearning for, was but a vain dream.

Depressed by this discovery, he tried to put the thought away, but it returned again and again with maddening persistence. Home. . . . Family. . . . Nikolai was embarking on some perilous venture, and he, too, was taking the plunge into the abyss of war; both of them were very lonely, both of them hungered for a kind word, for simple understanding and sympathy. Who would give them a send-off, who would support them in their fatal resolve? No one. Their mother might have been that person, but she had departed this world long ago. And so the two brothers would go to meet their wet naval death without a kind parting word, without a caress, without a kiss. For the first time in his brief adult life, he felt like crying. He was like a child whom people had forgotten; a child craving words of sympathy, if not love, words of encouragement, if not inspiration.

A tap on the door made him look round.

"May I come in?" he heard Sasha's voice. "I've brought you a bath towel."

"Thank you," he said mechanically. The door opened and Sasha came in with a large Turkish towel.

"You didn't say where you were going in such a hurry," she said, hanging up the towel, and glancing at him again with that odd look in her eyes. "I thought you'd come on leave, but you say you've only got two hours."

"No, Sasha, I haven't come on leave," Yuri said slowly. "I've dropped in to say good-bye."

"Where are you going?"

"To the war."

"What do you mean?" She stared at him.

"What I say. Tomorrow I'm joining my ship, and maybe I'll go into action right away."

She laughed and shook her head.

"Tell me another one. Who'll let you go, you've got to study."

"I'm going on my own, joining up as a seaman."

Sasha threw up her hands with an exclamation.

"Oh, Yuri Petrovich!" she cried out in the piteous voice of a wailing peasant woman. "Surely you're not joining up of your own free will?"

Yuri nodded his head. He wanted to say something, but glancing at her, was too deeply moved for speech. Her eyes were full of tears and her lips quivered.

"Oh, but how can you, Yuri Petrovich?" she whimpered. "You don't have to do it. Nikolai Petrovich can't help it, he's an officer, but you? You've got a chance to go on studying. You're so young—what if you suddenly drown?"

Her fright and compassion were so genuine, and the fact that she had said "drown" instead of "be killed" brought a lump to his own throat. He felt terribly sorry for himself. This was no joke. Besides the glory, there were the mines, the torpedoes and shells. . . . Suddenly he saw himself floundering in the sea with not a boat, not a life belt or a buoy around. "You'll drown. . . ."

"Don't worry, Sasha, everything will be *all right*," he said with a catch in his voice.

"Oh, you poor darling," she cried. "May God bless you. Come, let me kiss you at parting."

Her cool arms went round his neck and her mouth covered his with a warm moist ring. He stood still, arms hanging down his sides, not daring to touch her hot firm body that clung to his. He stood motionless, listening to the slow conquering movement that floated around his mouth, while his head swam dizzily.

Then his eyelids came down heavily, and with a sigh he put his arms round her and responded to her lips.

Oddly enough, this was the first time he was experiencing such a kiss. All those other kisses had been merely an amusement, a game, a professional prelude, and had never really gripped him. But this—

He understood that this kiss was not born of love, but of compassion and sympathy, and maybe—the sober thought flashed through his mind—maybe it was just calculation on the part of an experienced woman attracted to clean youth; no wonder she had been looking at him with that meaningful glance of hers. But these thoughts retreated farther and farther into a dim warm abyss from whence welled loftier and tragic thoughts that were at once poignantly sweet and sad. This was not Sasha, Irina's parlourmaid, who was kissing him with

such utter abandon, eyes half-closed, but a woman, who was seeing him off into battle. He sincerely believed that tomorrow would find him on the rolling iron deck of a destroyer with shells bursting all round him, and that this kiss was the last he would ever know in the life he was leaving, and so he gave himself up to it with a care-less ecstasy, thrilling to the magic of things unknown.

Suddenly he became aware of a sensation of coldness round his mouth. The hot circle that had ringed it fell away. He opened his eyes. Sasha had slipped out of his arms and vanished through the doorway. For several seconds he stood motionless, in a silent stupor of despair, then he heard the door bell ring—it sounded far, far away.

He looked at himself in the mirror. He presented a strange spectacle: eyes red and wild, cheeks wet with tears. Could he have wept without knowing it? He hastily turned on the water and let the cold jet pour over his face to wash away the telltale signs. It might be Irina, who had suddenly come home. She was the last person in the world he cared to meet just now. It meant playing the stupid old role of enamoured and devoted page, when his heart ached within him, his mind was in a tangle, and every tangled thread had an unanswerable question at the end of it. What could he talk to her about, when only five minutes ago he had caught himself thinking of her in the same vein as Anastasia Petrovna? He could never forgive her yesterday's escapade. He lingered at the tap, casting about in his mind how to act. For one thing, no silly frank disclosure of his plans. He must try and get away quickly.

Someone slapped him pretty heartily on the back. He looked up and could not believe his eyes: next to him stood Nikolai. Yuri rushed up to him just as he was, his face and hands wet.

"Kolcha!" he shouted delightedly, just as he used to do in childhood, when greeting his brother home from school with the pet name he had himself invented. "What luck! We might have missed each other."

He hastily wiped his face and kissed his brother heartily on his clean-shaven cheek, with its familiar smell of eau-de-cologne and tobacco. The lieutenant hugged him and lifted him bodily off the floor, as he used to do in the old days.

"Good boy, Yurchen, I'm glad you've come," Nikolai said, using a forgotten pet name of their childhood days. "This time I need you," he said, emphasising the "I". "I suppose we can talk here, seeing that the flat is empty."

So he knew then? Joy ebbed away instantly, and a feeling of harsh resentment rose up in him. At that moment Yuri almost

hated Irina. He glanced anxiously at his brother but the latter shouted out into the hall as if nothing had happened:

"Be a good girl, Sasha, rustle up something to eat!" and he came back to Yuri, explaining: "I'm not inviting you aboard the ship, I'm glad I found you here."

Yuri's heart sank. Apparently the "project" mentioned in the letter had been approved by the Admiral, and Nikolai had dropped in to say good-bye to Irina on his way to the unknown. But what could it be? He glanced at his brother again and seemed to catch something new about him, something grim and preoccupied, as if he had something on his mind all the time. Yuri started a gay patter about Old Dodo and the student he had met in the train as he followed his brother into the drawing-room.

He had been there only in the evenings, in the subdued light of silk-shaded lamps. Flooded now with morning sunshine, it looked quite different (as did many other things that day). He discovered that the thick pile carpet had a pattern, that the slender-legged occasional tables scattered about in the corners, always cluttered with boxes of sweets, cups, trays and wine glasses, looked strangely empty and were made of light maple wood. A baby grand Steinway, the lid of which, in the evening, was usually littered with a frivolous collection of brightly coloured music sheets containing two-steps, tangoes and ragtimes, now gleamed with the black varnish that befitted such a serious instrument. It was hard to believe that its organlike sounds were used mostly as an accompaniment to popular songs, musical-comedy hits, and even the appalling produce Rogul & Co. Next to the piano, on a tall curved tripod, stood a vase with a big bouquet of roses. Huge, full-blown and heavy, they stood with drooping heads, exhuding a powerful dying aroma.

The lieutenant went up to the vase, looked at the flowers with a proprietary air, and smelled them with pleasure.

"That Kozlov's a jewel!" he said. "And he whined that the roses weren't up to much. They're jolly good, I think. It's a pity there's no one to look at them."

He touched a large dark-red rose with tapering fingers. With a shudder that was almost a sigh it suddenly and soundlessly collapsed, spilling its petals on the carpet in an oblong little heap; it looked to Yuri like a tiny burial mound, and his heart contracted at the sight of it. My God, Drumsö, he thought. Nikolai, smiling, touched another. That one, too, collapsed as suddenly and soundlessly.

"*Tout passe, tout casse, tout tasse...* Kozlov was right—it turned out to be a poor bunch," he said, opening the music cabinet. "Have a little patience, Yuri. Old man Wagner has been hammering at my ears these last three days, but our Commander tells us that, being a German, it would be unpatriotic to play him, least of all on a ship of the Russian Imperial Navy." He placed the music on the stand and added apologetically as he seated himself: "I must steady my nerves a bit, we've got plenty of time to talk."

He turned over the pages with an air of abstraction, then let his hands drop heavily upon the keys; the piano responded with slow heavy chords, which Yuri immediately recognised. It was the first act of *Die Walküre*, the sombre melody of Walhalla, the hall of the gods, where Wotan received the warriors slain in battle.

Yuri quietly sat down on the sofa.

Wagner was an old favourite of Nikolai's, ever since his high-school days. He played him now, as then, "for himself", as he expressed it; technically his performance was rather fumbling, but very expressive and thoughtful. To Yuri, who imitated his brother in everything, Wagner soon became his favourite composer, whose music pushed even *Aida* and *Carmen* into the background. To appreciate the *Ring of the Nibelung* one had to make a close study of the musical diction by which Wagner hoped to revolutionise the music-drama. Listening for hours to Nikolai's playing and explanations, Yuri, without having learned yet to read music, was as good as any Wagnerian at steering a passage through the maze of Wagner's leitmotif system, which he used to denote not only gods and men, their emotions and relations, but even such philosophic and abstract concepts as Destiny, Perfidy, Ambition, and Doom. Yuri became so adept that his brother affirmed that if he knew half as much about the appanage princes of ancient Rus as he did about the Wagnerian heroes and gods, he would get excellent marks on history.

From the fragmentary passages that Nikolai was playing Yuri was therefore able to guess his brother's state of mind. Nikolai's fingers ran up and down the keyboard as if in frantic search of something reassuring, in search of an answer to something, an explanation. He was obviously under the stress of some inner perturbation at which Yuri could only guess. He skipped whole pages and lingered over others, passing from the swift flight of the Valkyrie to the love scene between Siegmund and Sieglinde, from the former's fight with Hunding to his story of how the mighty Volsung disappeared during a battle, leaving him an orphan. He lingered over the scene in which Siegmund, weaponless on the eve of his fight with Hunding, calls to

his father: "Volsung! Volsung! Where is thy sword?" He played this cry with such passionate despair that a chill ran up Yuri's spine. It made him think of Nikolai's letter, through whose usual irony could be felt a bitter sense of defencelessness in the face of forthcoming battle. He glanced at his brother involuntarily.

Nikolai was outwardly calm, his eyes fixed steadily on the music, and only the stern set of his mouth altered the habitual expression of his face. But when the leitmotif of Nothung, the father's sword, began to struggle through the music—first as a mere hint, then more and more clearly—Nikolai's face began to clear too. Siegmund sees overhead the magic sword thrust into the trunk of a tree, and the Nothung's short musical phrase (piercingly simple) comes out in the orchestra at full brazen strength, slow, smooth and jubilant, like a wave spilling its crest on the broad bosom of the sea. Nikolai smiled and repeated the passage, then abruptly broke off, his face darkening. With eyes on the music sheet, he plucked several heavy chords full of menace and hate, that admirably expressed the character of Hunding, who was to kill the hero.

Then he slowly turned over the sheets.

Now it was the closing fire scene—the best scene in the opera, Yuri thought. Here Wotan takes leave of his daughter, the Valkyrie Brünnhilde, who acted in defiance of his will and is cast by him under a spell of sleep until awakened by the first mortal who discovers her. Out of compassion, he surrounds his daughter with a wall of fire, which only such a hero shall penetrate who is freer than he is and undaunted by his spear. This scene Yuri was capable of listening to and playing any number of times without realising why it stirred him so deeply. It was certainly not the clumsily invented incidents, sometimes irritatingly illogical, in which the ancient god acted sometimes in a downright stupid manner. What gripped him was the music, the eternal farewell theme—no matter whose with whom—the poignant sadness of which stirred such hidden depths in the human heart.

Wholly absorbed in the organ-like sounds of the piano, he mentally followed the polyphonic orchestra, which no piano could adequately convey. Nikolai, this time, was playing with greater expression than ever, his left hand uttering, as it were, deep-voiced words which Yuri knew by heart. Usually, he translated them as Wotan's actual speech. But just now, in Nikolai's nervous rendering, they had another meaning that was anything but Wagnerian. Wotan sang: "Farewell, my brave and beautiful child! Thou once the life and light of my heart!" but Yuri felt that this was Nikolai addressing

Irina with passionate anguish, for this was what he had come to tell her, and had not found her. What if the opera text spoke of warriors feasting in Valhalla, of the flagon of mead which Brünnehilde would never more proffer to her father—all this meant nothing, it was just a mere outward mantle. Beneath it all, like winter water under ice, ran the irresistible undertow of music, whose heart-wringing message sounded in every slow-moving passage of the superbly orchestrated score.

Wotan sang: "Those eyes so lustrous and clear"—and Yuri felt that this, too, was meant for her, Irina. Did not Nikolai's poetry, dedicated to her, speak of this very striving towards some supreme happiness, of the struggle against the Hag-Destiny, against darkness, vulgarity and evil. These verses, in Yuri's opinion (which he never expressed to his brother) were ardent and sincere, but amateurish and vague. True, after hearing them, Yuri would toss and turn in his hammock, thinking of his own, still unconfided, verses, and wishing he could achieve the same frankly romantic admiration of Woman, the same chivalrous and highly praiseworthy feelings that distinguished Nikolai's verses. They were founded upon that cherished fanatical belief in Irina's perfection which had given rise to the wardroom's outwardly respectful but ironical nickname of "earthly god". It was to her, Irina, now having a good time at Drumsö, that were addressed words which made such painful hearing: "Their lustrous gaze lights on me now as my lips imprint this last farewell." There was neither a last parting nor a last kiss. Yet Nikolai was obviously embarking upon some grim and dangerous enterprise, seeing that he did not invite Yuri to his ship. Could this really be leave-taking? A choking sensation came into his throat. "On happier mortal here shall they beam; the grief-suffering god may never henceforth behold them."

He had never heard Nikolai play like this before. The word "grief-suffering" rose sharply on a wave of deep sorrow in the accents of a man stricken with pain and despair. Yuri waited fearfully for what was to come. In a moment Wotan would bend over Brünnehilde as she lay upon the rock and give her his last kiss. This, to Yuri, had always been the most pathetic moment. Now, his heart turned over in him. The slow solemn strains of the orchestra expressed utter despair, the pain of resignation in face of life's ruthless course, which not even the gods could alter.

*"Now heart-torn he gives thee his kiss, and
Taketh thy godhood away!"
It was all over.*

The Valkyrie was no more, the divine maiden-warrior worthy of a divine love was gone. There was left a woman, beautiful perhaps, but not divine, not even an earthly god.

Perhaps that was how it should be? The green fragrant witchery of the bathroom, accursed Drumsö, all that day's sudden conjectures and thoughts, raised a wild tumult of soul in him, evoking pity and anger, the fear that Nikolai now understood and was suffering, and a cruel joy that this had happened and that it were perhaps better so.

All of a sudden secret terror seized him at the thought that he was seeing Nikolai for the last time and that the words of Wagnerian farewell applied to him, the eldest of the two Livitins, the only near one left to him in the whole wide world. He covered his eyes with his hand to hide the tears that swam in them. What a day, come to think of it, what a day!

Already Wotan had summoned Loge, the god of fire, and the latter, almost visibly, had sprung into glowing life in the music, spreading in a wave of fire; and then separate little tongues of flame were born with a crystal-like tinkle, and amid their glimmer emerged the sweeping, triumphant, jubilant melody of Siegfried, the as yet unborn hero, who will be freer than the old god and will pass through the fire, which is now burning with a steadier flame in the slowspreading sounds, and will go on burning thus for many a long year—but Yuri heard nothing of all this. A cold sense of bewilderment and disaster weighted him down. What could he tell Nikolai?

And when the Steinway fell silent, Yuri became frightened. He had to return to the world of realities. He was afraid to take his hand away from his eyes. Then he heard the lid of the piano being softly lowered, and Nikolai's voice saying calmly:

"I didn't write you that we've cut down our Eiffel Tower. I've cut away the main-mast. It appears that the name of the fire god these days is not Loge but Acetylene. Works splendidly, you should have seen how beautiful it looks! I heard this music all the time."

Yuri drew his hand away from his face with a brushing movement across his eyes. Nikolai was standing by the piano, clean-limbed and handsome, in immaculate white tunic, lighting a cigarette. His face was calm again. What marvellous self-control!—Yuri thought. Maybe he had thought this all up, and there had been nothing of the kind—no parting, no kiss taking the godhead away? He glanced at his brother almost resentfully. Acetylene? Was that all? But then he noticed that the lighted match was making barely perceptible circles round the tip of the cigarette. He had not been wrong then!

He felt like flinging his arms round his brother's neck and pouring his soul out to him. It might be silly and cruel, but who cared!

"Let's go and have a bite, I've got to be off soon," Nikolai said calmly. He made for the dining-room, shouting into the hall as he went: "Rustle up some brandy, Sasha, will you!"

The table was laid. On the sun-flooded tablecloth stood coffee, milk, butter in cut-glass, little bowls of sour milk sprinkled Finnish-fashion with cinnamon, toast, ham, eggs covered with a serviette and the invariable Swedish *sext*—a sectional plate containing various hors d'oeuvres. The lieutenant tossed his napkin onto his knees and moved up the bowl of sour milk.

"I don't know about you, but I haven't had any breakfast—the Admiral sent for me at colours."

"So that's what it is," Yuri thought with mingled fear and curiosity. Now he would learn what "project" it was Nikolai had sent to the Commander-in-Chief. But Nikolai went on eating his sour milk with relish and reached for the ham.

Yuri could not contain himself any longer.

"What was that you wrote me—" he began rather haltingly, but broke off as Sasha entered the room. He addressed himself to the food, but something—some dim hope or simple curiosity—made him look up at her.

Smiling not only with her vivid luscious mouth, but with her whole coquettish demeanor, Sasha stepped lightly and noiselessly towards the table with a tray in her hands. She was now in her usual starched uniform of dazzling white—her firm breasts sheathed in a close-fitting dainty pinafore, her arms in narrow cuffed sleeves, her slender neck in a high collar reaching to the pink lobes of her ears, and her dark hair crowned with a small cap. It was no longer possible to believe that only half an hour ago this woman had embraced him with such sincere and simple candour. What was it? Was everything in this house mere playacting? Yuri watched her every movement with jealous intensity.

Without looking at him Sasha set down on the table two narrow wine glasses, a cut-glass bowl containing pistachio nuts roasted with salt, and a black paunchy bottle with a brightly coloured label picturing a swallow flying between two rows of receding barrels.

"Nikolai Petrovich, you ought to tell your man Kozlov to lay in a supply of your favourite Swallow. They say the shops will soon stop selling it."

Suddenly it struck Yuri that among the multitude of bottles he had helped Sasha put away, there had not been a single one with

such a label as this. A deep sense of grievance for his brother's sake flared up anew in him. What a shame, really—to make up a whole list and forget that Martel was Nikolai's favourite drink.

"Don't worry, Sasha," the lieutenant answered, carefully beheading his egg. "You can't provide a supply to last through the whole war just the same. Why, is this the last one?"

"There's one more left, I've put it away."

"Thanks, we'll keep it for some special occasion. You can go now, Sasha, we shan't want anything else."

Again Yuri looked up at her. This time she shot at him that swift disturbing glance that set his pulses thudding again. What the devil! Which of her was the real one? The hot ring momentarily circled his lips again and quickly vanished. The snow-white dainty figure disappeared through the door with a light noiseless step.

He shook himself as though coming out of a dream.

"As I was saying," he began again, "you hinted at something serious in your letter and that's why I'm here. What is this project of yours? Can't you tell me?"

"Certainly, that's what I piped you out for," Nikolai readily agreed, starting on another egg. "After all, there are only two Livitins in this world, you and I. I was afraid we wouldn't be given a chance to say good-bye. It's a simple thing and not very novel—I'm not inventing any gunpowder, but it's something I can be proud of before my brother."

He went on eating with relish the while he laconically set forth his plan of laying a mine barrage at the exit from the Kiel bay.

Yuri stopped eating and stared at his brother. The latter's brief, unemotional, military-like report conjured up a thrilling, breath-taking picture.

The first hours of the war. The German fleet steams out of Kiel into the Baltic for a lightning strike. Battleships, cruisers, destroyers, maybe even battle cruisers of the High Sea Fleet—all those vessels made familiar by Jane and Tashchenbuch and the naval games at college—the *Moltke*, *Deutschland*, *Kaiser Wilhelm der Grosse*, *Lützow*, *Köln* and *Strassburg*—all are sent east, to the Gulf of Finland, against Kronstadt, against St. Petersburg, the first terrifying, terrorising strike, the naval Sedan. German swaggering might, with fleet steaming ahead in parade formation, music and all, damn them! They knew only too well that the Russian fleet had not had time to mobilise and that this would be no naval engagement, but a game of cat and mouse—a dozen cats against a single mouse.

The German ships sail into the night, sail without a screen, without mine-sweepers, for are they not in their home waters with the war only just starting? What have they got to fear? Then suddenly—an explosion! The *Moltke* heels over. Well, if not the *Moltke*, then some light cruiser like the *Augsburg*, or even a lousy numbered destroyer! The thing is she goes up in the air in her home waters, in their own fairway leading to easy, assured victory calculated with German precision. Another explosion.... Then another.... Russian submarines? Mines? When did they manage it? The fleet turns back into Kiel, the mine-sweepers start on their job, the first and most terrifying strike has been thwarted....

He gazed at his brother with adoring glowing eyes, all aquiver with excitement. A strike like that during the first hours of the war—and by whom, by his brother Nikolai!

“Gosh, Kolcha! Why ... why, it’s simply smashing!” he cried, finding his tongue at last.

He jumped up and began pacing the room excitedly.

“If you pull it off, why, it’ll change the whole course of the war! They think we’re sheep out there, just standing and waiting for the knife, and we go and.... It’s wonderful! And so simple too! Look here,” he suddenly rushed up to Nikolai, “take me with you. I was going to join a destroyer just the same, but I’d prefer to be with you in this. Take me, Kolcha, please!” he implored in an ecstasy of delight. “It’ll work out fine, you’ll see. Somebody else aboard the timber carrier must be able to speak English besides yourself, in case of an inspection. I speak English enough to get by. And if we have to use the boat coming back I can manage the sails fairly well—I got a prize for this. Take me, Kolcha, do!” he begged.

The lieutenant looked at him with a smile, and when the outburst was over, said in a didactic tone:

“How many times have I told you—if you want to convince anybody, never gesticulate, try to do it by logic, not feelings. Sit down and cool off.”

Yuri flared up.

“I can’t make you out—do you have to act at such a moment?”

The lieutenant reached for the bottle.

“What sort of moment is it, if I may ask?”

“Well, you know what I mean.... After you’ve told me everything....”

“What exactly do you mean by everything?”

“Why, it’s sheer heroism, a daring magnificent plan!”

"My dear boy, you're mistaken," Nikolai said, intent on pulling out the cork. "It's no heroism whatever. It's a fantastic tale out of the Adventure Serial, or a thousand-two hundred-metre screen play in full colours—whichever you like."

Having coped with the cork, he wound up in a casual tone:

"It's all off, though."

Yuri turned to him swiftly.

"What do you mean?"

"What I say. Sit down. Let's come down to earth for a change."

He filled Yuri's wine glass and raised his own.

"Let's drink to the memory of another brain child of Lieutenant Livitin's throttled at birth. . . ."

He slowly sipped his brandy, holding the glass up to his eyes after each gulp to admire the golden sun-kissed fluid. Yuri sat with the glass in his hand, staring dazedly at his brother, trying to puzzle out what he had just heard. Nikolai's coolness struck him as unnatural, frightening.

More than anything did he fear that Nikolai would break down, for then his own heart would give way under the strain, crushed by the weight of the disaster whose magnitude he realised only too well. He had seen Nikolai's tears only once, and could not face them a second time. It happened one sunny day in May, in an old Siberian city, where they lived after their father had retired and soon afterwards died. Early that morning Yuri had laid out on the floor his multi-funneled ships, which Nikolai had designed and pasted together out of thick drawing-paper for playing at naval battles, the rules of which (evolutions, broadsides, etc.) he had drawn up too. The fleet's decisive engagement had been put off for nearly a month, as Nikolai was busy with his examinations. He had come home from school that day in a cheerful, happy mood, having passed his last examination. He was opening his box with the Japanese ironclads (the Russian fleet was commanded by Yuri, of course), when the shrill cry of the newsboy reached them through the open window: "Telegrams from the theatre of war! Special edition! Tremendous naval battle in Tsushima Strait! Whole Russian fleet destroyed!" Nikolai paled, dropped the box and ran out into the street.

He was away a long time, and Yuri found him in the front garden with a newspaper in his hand. He was sitting there, crying soundlessly. Big tears rolled down his agonised distorted face, and great sobbing sighs shook his whole body from time to time. Yuri took the newspaper, read it, and began to cry too—with soundless,

masculine tears. They went inside, collected their paper ships, and put them away in their boxes, from which they were never taken out again. That day was the end of boyhood for Nikolai and of childhood for Yuri. He never saw Nikolai in tears after that, not even when their mother died.

But now there was something in Nikolai's too deliberate and ironic coolness that betrayed deeper feelings of utter despair and gloom, a repressed tumult of soul that threatened to erupt with volcanic force.

The pause lengthened. Nikolai poured out a second glass and examined it silently against the light. Stunned and bewildered though he was, Yuri suddenly saw the reason for his being there. He was the only person in the world—with the exception, perhaps, of Irina—Nikolai could unburden his heart to. But Irina was not there, and Yuri felt he had to do something immediately to break that dangerous silence. Nikolai had to be helped to let off steam—by irony, cursing, anger, complaint—anything but this locked-in self-poisoning silence. That time in the front garden Yuri could express his helpless love for him only by crying together with him. Now that he was grown up he was bound to help him.

Yuri said the first thing that came into his head.

"D'you mean to say the Admiral failed to grasp what any first-year midshipman could tumble to? I can't understand it. How could he reject such a plan?"

Nikolai regarded him gravely, without a shadow of affected cynicism.

"The Admiral grasped it all right, from what I could see. But the Admiral has no say in the matter. That's the trouble, Yuri."

"What do you mean?"

"All mortals are at the mercy of fate, and we naval men are at the mercy of the Admiralty. But drink your brandy and steady your nerves," he interrupted himself. "Why, you're all atremble. Anyone would think it was you who had suffered shipwreck, not me. Come on—skål!"

Yuri swallowed some of the brandy and grimaced.

"So it's the Admiralty again?" he said, hastily pouring some coffee into his cup.

"You said it," Nikolai confirmed with nervous gayety. "Yes, the Admiralty, God bless it! The unsleeping eye, blast it! Without it the fleets daren't piss or fart. . . ."

The lieutenant achieved such a long and intricate masterpiece of Russian profanity that Yuri, despite the dramatic tension of the

situation, chuckled inwardly. The brothers, in dealing with each other, usually avoided strong language, and this was the first time Yuri had heard Nikolai's performance. He fully appreciated the force of it, which, for wittiness and sheer lustihood was a cut above the blunderbuss obscenity of Chuftin, boatswain of the *Aurora*, who started the morning scrub-decks (in which both sailors and midshipmen took part) with a hoarse naval liturgy, which ended with the invariable tailpiece: "This doesn't apply to the midshipmen gentlemen!" The lieutenant's malediction showed that the volcano had found a crater for its eruption, and that Yuri had succeeded in opening a safety valve, on which he congratulated himself.

After letting off steam in this fashion, the lieutenant poured out some coffee for himself. He sipped at it, saying: "You're dying to know how events developed, aren't you? I'll tell you. Maybe it'll teach you not to imitate your elder brother."

Calmly, without caustic witticisms or archaic turns of speech, in a simple friendly tone such as had once held Yuri spellbound with stories about Columbus and the Battle of Sinope, he told him what had taken place that morning.

The Admiral received Nikolai and started talking about his project as soon as he came aboard the *Rurik*. It appeared that he had got in touch with Libau the day before (it being closer to Kiel than Helsingfors or Abo), and showed Nikolai a list of detained foreign vessels. He suggested dropping the idea of placing the mines in the ship's hold and advised concealing them on the upper deck inside the stacked timber. This would make it unnecessary to arrange half-ports astern for dropping the mines—the rails could be laid straight on the deck and camouflaged with a false planking, which would considerably reduce the period of preparations for the cruise. Finally, he said that the steamer's crew should be made up of Letts, Estonians, and Finns, who should be forbidden to speak Russian in order to give the appearance of a foreign vessel. The Admiral agreed to Livitin's request to "captain" the timber-carrier. In a word, everything went so smoothly that Nikolai was in his seventh heaven.

At this point Boshnakov appeared in the doorway with an elegant leather folder in his hand and reported receipt of a telegram from the Chief of Naval Staff. Slowly the Admiral opened the folder, read the brief telegram, and became livid with anger. He got up and paced the cabin, then came back to the table, reread the telegram and dismissed Boshnakov with a gruff command. The latter winked at Livitin conspiratorially—as much as to say, I've been able to do something, see!—and left the cabin.

"What followed was a phantasmagoria," Nikolai continued. "The Admiral turned to me and said that he had no time to continue our conversation, that my plan was impracticable, untimely and two other 'un'-something or other—I don't remember what. I couldn't believe my ears. His eyes were blotted out by rage. He looked at me without seeing me, and croaked: 'It's nonsense, sir, sheer fantastic nonsense, and that's about all I can tell you! You may go!' I went—straight for the door. I went thinking: what's happened? Suddenly he calls out: 'Lieutenant Livitin!' I turn round. He beckons me to the table. I go up. He stands rolling his eyes. Then: 'Would you care to join my Staff? I need men who can think. *Think*—d'you understand? And you're one of them. Do you agree? I'll give the order at once.'"

"Well?" Yuri asked with bated breath. He saw a brilliant career for his brother—the Admiral's favourite, the brains of the Staff, a naval genius. . . .

"Well what?" Nikolai said, refilling his glass. "Have you ever seen a Staff? You haven't? Then shut up. I know a thing or two about it. It's a job you've got to love, the way Boshnakov does: twenty-three pencils in your pockets, a what-can-I-do-for-you expression on your face, a who-cares-a-hang attitude towards the ships, and blind worship of a bit of paper. To hell with it! I prefer to go down with the *Generalissimo*."

"Is that what you told the Admiral?" Yuri asked, glad that he had been able to draw Nikolai out of himself at last. Indeed, Nikolai had quite a different look now.

"Goodness, no! I told him politely and diplomatically that I was very grateful, Your Excellency, but being a gunner, I'd always dreamt of laying down my life in a gun battle. As for the Staff, one had to have a natural inclination that way, which I didn't have."

"And what did he say?"

"He got angry. Rolled his eyes again. 'I thought you'd understand me. The war's only just beginning, and I need men. Your plan shows that you could. . . . But, I'm not forcing you. It's a pity, though.' Suddenly, I felt sorry for him. It was harder for him than it was for me. He's no Makarov, of course, but I don't see anyone else in our naval firmament. Know what I tell you, Yuri—if it wasn't for my deadly hatred of staffs, I'd have gone over to him, really I would. But the Admiralty's a thorn in his side, so why should I go and stick my head out?"

He drained his glass and began to turn it in his fingers.

"One thing I'd like to know in my wretched position—what was in that telegram that Boshnakov came barging in with during our conversation. You can't imagine, Yuri, how painful it is to realise that you're capable of moving mountains, and instead of that you're put in charge of such a serious job as shifting junk about from corner to corner, and not more than a pound-weight a time." Nikolai got out a cigarette. "I must be going about things the wrong way. Both in the service and in life. That's why I'm getting kicks in the shins from the Old Hag. I wouldn't like you to follow in my footsteps. But then, from what I know, you have the Livitin streak, and I might as well save my breath. But don't forget that though the heroic corps-de-ballet at Kiel did not take place, our own native Revel eels are waiting at the bottom of the Gulf of Finland to receive the crew of the *Generalissimo*, of which your elder brother is a member. So please take his words as his will and testament."

He lit his cigarette at last.

"And so listen. You are the last of the Livitins, the last copy of the revised and improved edition, so to speak, and you should not repeat the mistakes of those who went before you. Father, as you know, butted in with his plan for buying ships in England for the new Pacific Fleet, and instead of this leading to a cushy job somewhere in the Admiralty Board, he was obliged to retire before qualifying for an admiral's pension. And why? Because he expressed a thought, Yuri. And thoughts, especially premature ones that are likely to disturb the authorities, should not be expressed aloud. Take this from me, your father's son, who has no little experience of his own in this matter, and you, young man, learn from the experience of these two generations of the Russian Imperial Navy. In our naval service, which you were fool enough to take up, following your brother's bad example, thought is something like a louse: it itches, it's a nuisance, it's useless, nay, harmful. If you want to win your admiral's eagles, serve according to the oath and instructions, the way my charming Sub-Lieutenant Gudkov is doing. The trouble is you won't be able to!"

"Of course I won't," Yuri said vehemently.

"That's just it. Consequently, in order not to degrade naval thought to comparison with a louse, something apparently must be done to make it useful to the country's might and greatness against the overweening foe. . . ."

After a pause Nikolai suddenly asked:

"I say, did it ever occur to you what would happen if the Germans beat us?"

The question was so startling that Yuri's eyes flew to his brother's face in amazement. Nikolai laughed, and without waiting for a reply, went on:

"But what's the use of asking you. There are no 'ifs' about this for you, of course. Sort of 'rejoice, brave Ross, amid the thunder of victory'. But we didn't hear much of that thunder during the last war, if you remember, and the Ross, instead of rejoicing, shed bitter tears. And has anything changed during the last ten years? In the Army? In the Navy? In our Admiralty, God bless it? Absolutely nothing has changed. The only difference is that this time we are dealing with a stronger enemy. Ergo, the consequences of military failures will be stronger too."

"What are you driving at?" Yuri said sharply. The conversation had touched on ground which he preferred to avoid, assuming this to be a relic of Nikolai's Siberian schoolday enthusiasms. Such subjects he believed were best avoided by naval officers (among whom he ranked himself in advance).

"Just at what you were thinking," the lieutenant said coolly, "—at revolution. But not that childish affair that took place in nineteen five after the unsuccessful war, but something bigger and far more serious. What's eating you? Don't you know your elementary logic—that a given cause must always be followed by a given effect?"

Yuri was, indeed, boiling. Nikolai, obviously under the impression of his talk with the Admiral, had dropped back into that sneering iconoclastic mood of his which Yuri hated so much. Now he would start lashing out at everything and everybody, interspersing his speech with paradoxes and genial cynicisms.

"But why should we lose the war?" Yuri said, simmering with anger. "There's no comparison: that time we were on our own, but now we have allies—England, France!"

The lieutenant smiled wryly.

"In the next world, Yuri, I'm sure to be asked how I brought up my younger brother, and I'll get kicked in the shins again, like I did in this one. I regret to see my young brother a prey to the idiotic illusions of politicians like that smug pot-bellied lawyer of yours—what's his name?—Sergei Izvekov. . . . Allies did you say, Yuri? The Entente Cordiale? The bonds of kinship, the kingly cousins of Great Britain and Russia? Ah, Yuri, Yuri! I envy you your blissful ignorance! I want you to understand this simple thing: the Allies are bound to join in the scrap, once they've started it. But their job will be that of the gentleman squire, ours that of the serf—to do all the dirty work for them. The main war won't be

fought out on their territory—on the tidy plains of France or the seas which England has grabbed for herself. The Germans are no fools to go poking their noses in there. It will be fought out here, Yuri, in Russia. It's here that we'll have the mincing-machine of the infantry, and the boiling cauldron of the Baltic. We'll bear the brunt of it, mark my word."

"So what!" Yuri said vehemently. "All the greater honour for us if we bear the brunt of the war!"

"Quite right, Yuri. It won't be the first time we're saving Europe. Who shielded it against the Mongol invasion? We, Russians. We bore the Asiatic yoke for nearly three hundred years. We ate weeds and dressed in hemp when Europe gorged on snipe and their ladies' charms were wrapped in Venetian brocades. We forgot how to read and write almost at the very birth of literacy, in order that Europe, behind our homespun backs reeking with slaves' sweat, could create the paintings, poetry, and music of the Renaissance. Can you imagine what progress we would have made if not for those two and a half centuries of slavery! And Napoleon? Who saved Europe from iron-handed absolutism, who gave back to countries their faces and independence? And now for the third time we are screening enlightened Europe from German conceited philistinism, from deadening Prussian *Ordnung* and precisianism, from the pedantry that kills the living spirit of men. And who's going to thank us for it? Who and how?"

Nikolai spoke with such passion that it suddenly dawned on Yuri—these thoughts had not come to him on the spur of the moment. Obviously, they had been occupying his mind for a long time, and there was nothing one could say against them. Yuri's only reply to this straight question was a vague gesture.

"I'll tell you how," Livitin said, answering his own question. "They'll give us a tip and be done with it—a patch of territory and a farthing's worth of indemnity. And remember this: if the war ends with the victory of the Entente and you, a young sub-lieutenant, will be taken on a hurrah cruise to Havre and Portsmouth (read: Paris and London), don't have any illusions. No matter what fuss they make of us, it's they, our saintly allies, who are going to share the cake, while we sit humbly at the table waiting for our piece to be handed down."

The unusual tone of anger and bitterness in Nikolai's voice surprised Yuri. The lieutenant even banged his fist on the table.

"And for that we are selflessly prepared to feed the eels here in the Baltic, and the worms along the whole vast front that is being

set up. The mere thought of it is maddening. You just asked me what makes me think we're heading for defeat. You want confirmation, do you? It's a pity you weren't at yesterday's dinner, you would have got it from the sweet lips of that cheerful idiot of ours, Vetkin. The fact that Shiyarov didn't stop him only goes to show how bad things really are. I don't like the way we're going into this war, Yuri. I don't like it at all. It's all wrong, we're unprepared. I wouldn't have time to lay all the proof before you, but you can take my word for it. It's as bad as bad can be. You're too young and too loyal to realise how bad."

Nikolai suddenly clasped his head in both hands, rumpling his well-groomed hair. He sat like that for nearly a minute, then lowered his hands and drank off his cooled coffee at a gulp. Yuri refilled his cup immediately, thinking that perhaps he had had a drop too much. Nikolai noticed his brother's naive gesture.

"No, Yuri, coffee won't help. I feel rotten. Some day you'll understand this conversation. What do you think—what made me jump at the idea of planting mines at Kiel, an idea that came to me up there on the mast, amid the glow and sounds of the Wagnerian fire? I know you too well to believe that you think this to be mere ambition, a bid for fame or glory. But others might have construed it just that way, because such an adventure could have no operational or even tactical effect. What it could do was make an impression. And that is not an unimportant factor, especially during the first hours of war. Don't forget that every bully is at heart an ordinary vulgar coward, and if you give him a timely punch on the nose he'll run away. But if you stand in front of him meekly, with eyes shut tight, waiting for him to punch yours, you'd better run away yourself while the going's good. The German admirals feel themselves masters of the Baltic, that's why they're so brazen-faced."

The lieutenant pushed his wine glass away and went on with animation.

"Can you imagine how flabbergasted the German admirals would be if only one of the eggs popped at Kiel. They know that we've made considerable progress in mining activities since Tsushima, and that we've got no end of mines. And if the Russians have contrived to spring such a surprise right under their noses during the first hours of the war, what were they capable of doing in the Baltic? In the Gulf of Finland? That was the idea, Yuri. Not destroying one or two enemy ships, but applying an electric shock to the well-ordered brains of the German General Staff. The important thing

for us is to win time. It's surprising—you grasped it at once, and even said that about being sheep, but not the Admiralty!"

"Of course I grasped it," Yuri said, now looking at his brother with adoration. The latter nervously stubbed out his cigarette in the massive glass ash-tray.

"It's hopeless now, we've lost precious time. It's such a shame, Yuri, because we shoot better than the Germans, better than anyone else in the world for that matter. Tsushima helped us there, we've learned a bit since then. But we have nothing to shoot with. The new long-range guns are lying at the Obukhov Works, waiting for the dreadnoughts and battle cruisers to be built for them. And why are they waiting? Because it is taking years to build these ships at the none too adequate Baltic and Admiralty shipyards instead of ordering them in England from Vickers, say. Did you see what a beauty they made of the *Rurik*? With us it's more thieving than building. And not so much thieving as fighting for profits. Meanwhile we gunners are sitting without guns, and the guns without the ships. Oh, what's the use of talking!" The lieutenant tossed off his glass and refilled it. "Our Robespierre is right—I mean Petruchio Morozov, sub-lieutenant of the Russian Imperial Navy and secret revolutionary. The whole fleet needs a big refit. And not only the fleet—this whole flourishing state of ours. . . ."

"You're talking nonsense!" Yuri flared up again. "I can understand how you feel, but you can't say such things!"

"Yes you can, Yuri, you can say anything. We're heading for disaster and this is no time to observe the proprieties."

Yuri fought back an impulse to get up and leave the table. This was the limit really! He could understand Nikolai's state of mind, but surely this failure of the Kiel affair ought not to make a man lose all sense of proportion. Why, the things he was saying might have come from the lips of Valentin Izvekov, or rather that student agitator he had been wanting to hide in his flat from the Okhranka. But as always when his brother's caustic monologue ran to extremes, Yuri could find no arguments that would not sound naive or ridiculous. All he could do was to shrug his shoulders.

"What's more," Nikolai resumed, "all this has been predetermined by the course of events during the Japanese war. History's an unpredictable old lady, my dear chap. If there's anything you and I can predict, it's how best to steer a course in life. The question is what am I to do with myself in the present situation? This also goes for my younger brother, for whom I am responsible as the oldest scion of a dying race. . . ."

Irritated though Yuri was by this unexpected turn of the conversation, and anxious to pass to the subject uppermost in his mind—that of getting Nikolai to help him join a destroyer—he looked up at his brother with expectant curiosity.

“The trouble, Yuri, is that the revolution is not and will not be made by us—I mean by you and me. We don’t belong. The hatred towards us officers is too great, and has been rankling for centuries. Men like Morozov, who joined the Navy only yesterday, will be treated like one of themselves, but you and I—never. Our fathers’ unpaid debts are upon us. The burden of rope ends and rods, the age-old enmity of wardroom and lower deck, of masters and matlows. You think I don’t know that there are revolutionary organisations in the mess decks? I forgot to tell you—yesterday one of my gunners, Tulmankov, got into hot water. He dirtied the stern eagle. I thought it was because he resented Shiyarov’s punishment. But when he was being shipped ashore, Tulmankov called for the assistance of some fighting organisation or other. Apparently such an organisation exists aboard, but you and I will never have access to it as long as we live. There’s no communication, no bridge. No matter who I am and what I think, I’ll never get in there, nor will you. But there’s another way. Do you remember me telling you about my august friend?”

Yuri remembered it only too well. During an exercise cruise, Nikolai was moved to the hospital barge with a lacerated knee caused while diving, and was laid next to a midshipman of a senior company. They fell into conversation without knowing each other. Wagner provided common ground, the new acquaintance proving to be an ardent Wagnerite. This was the beginning of an odd and ill-assorted friendship, for the midshipman turned out to be a Romanov Prince, the Duke of Leichtenberg, junior member of the royal family with the title of Highness, stepson of Grand Duke Nikolai Nikolayevich. The prince joined the Black Sea Fleet after graduating from Naval College, and Nikolai had not mentioned him during the last two or three years.

“Of course I do,” Yuri said, “but what’s he got to do with it?”

“Sh!” Nikolai put a finger to his lips. “I’m going to let you into a state secret. Breathe not a word, said the poet—which one, I can’t for the life of me remember!”

Yuri got angry.

“Look here, Nikolai, if you want to speak seriously then be serious and drop this clowning!”

Nikolai laughed heartily.

"How ridiculously young you are, Yuri, I simply envy you!" he said good-humouredly. "And I'm glad you've come, I've got all this off my chest. Some day you'll come to understand that serious things are best spoken of in a flippant tone. Well then, the secret is this: the St. Petersburg officers of the Guards, some of the naval officers and several ministers are for making a palace coup and proclaiming Nikolai Nikolayevich regent for the crown prince. This is to be the salvation of Russia. My august friend invited me last spring to lend a hand, dangling the bait of a future career. I thought it over and turned the offer down, thus causing a rift within the lute, I'm afraid. I think you'll understand me. Greve, say, or that fool Bobrinsky of yours, would jump at it, it's just their line, but hardly mine or yours. For one thing, these new Decembrists would not take us into their company. We don't belong there either. So there we are, poking around like a fart in a bucket, neither here nor there. It's a dismal look-out whichever way you look at it: no matter how the revolution starts—from above or below—you and I belong nowhere, neither to the sailors nor to the aristocrats."

"I can't make you out," Yuri said sarcastically. "Apparently you're prepared to make the revolution yourself, only you don't know how to go about it and with whom. Last spring you sang a different tune—d'you remember?—about the millstones of history grinding every grain that tries to raise its head, and about how important it was to find your own little hole. When were you joking—now or then?"

"Pretty biting," Nikolai smiled. "I'm ready to explain, though. You see, I have two philosophies: one shaped by life's experience, which consists in a desire to find a little hole between the millstones, the other a desire to rearrange and change everything. Not for nothing did I attend the meetings at school, secret and open, and kick up a dust. With the first philosophy I comfort myself and try to persuade myself that I am all for a quiet life and sophisticated cynicism. The second just gushes out of you, especially when you get a kick in the pants, like today. Which of them will get the upper hand, time will show. But now"—the lieutenant consulted his watch—"now time floweth, and we together with it, as Padre Feoktist would say. The picket-boat is coming for me at eleven thirty. The only *profit* from my adventure is that I asked Boshnakov to wigwag Shiyarov to pick me up ashore instead of sending the boat to the *Rurik*. This is to make them think the Admiral sent me on some errand ashore—I'll make up something. Thought I'd be clever, acting like a cadet, but got it handed to me in the neck. Will you see me off?"

"I was thinking of going out to you by that picket-boat," Yuri said.

"I'm glad things have turned out the way they have. Everything's topsy-turvy on board and we wouldn't have had a chance to talk." Nikolai suddenly laughed. "No end of important jobs. This morning Vetkin asked the Commander to reinstate steward Akinochkin, who was banished to the sailors' mess two years ago for dropping an artichoke on the head of the crown prince when he was pleased to dine with us. Shiyanov has not only ordered him back, but has appointed him Chief Wardroom Steward. So now we've got a Susanin of our own. And another thing. You remember that portrait of Wilhelm hanging over the piano in the uniform of Post Captain of the Russian Navy in memory of the meeting of the monarchs at Björkö? Shiyanov ordered it to be taken down, but the question arose—what to do with it? Someone suggested burning it in the stokehold, but Gudkov objected: after all, he was an Emperor, and you couldn't set such an example to the sailors. . . . D'you know what Shiyanov decided? He had it wrapped up in paper and consigned to the boatswain's store. Playing safe. So that's how we live, my boy. Those are our cares and worries—war! Ah well, let's be going."

CHAPTER 15

The destroyer, spurred on by Admiral's orders, raced eastward at a furious speed, at the risk of an engine breakdown. The pulsating tremor of her long lean body testified that her boilers, engines and screws were strained to their utmost limit. The seething tumbling foam of the ship's wake broke the silvery blue serenity of the becalmed bay. The shrill wind whipped the streaming flag, whistled in one's ears and spread over the water a yellow-black tail of smoke belching from all four funnels.

Yuri stood on the after bridge in bewildered solitude, gripping the rail and turning his face away from the violent wind. Everything around him—the bridge-apron, the signal halyards, the grill flooring, the life buoys with fluttering vanes suspended from the hand-rail—quivered, clattered and flapped in response to the hull's vibration. But this balanced tremor of the different ship's parts so familiar to everyone except himself and in which everyone except him could easily tell the true safe sounds from the untrue and the dangerous—this tempestuous and exciting symphony of the ship's forced speed, which he had never witnessed before, roused but little interest in

him. He had never felt so desperately miserable, crushed by a sense of his own utter helplessness and futility. Not only was he standing on the after bridge of the madly racing destroyer, an unwanted lonely passenger, but the destroyer herself was hurrying, not westward, where valour and glory loomed, but eastward, not to meet the German fleet, but making for St. Petersburg, back to the humdrum workaday life.

And so his dream was shattered, and no one could help him now, if not even Nikolai had been able to.

The destroyer *Stroiny* was speeding towards St. Petersburg, straining every ounce of her five-thousand-seven-hundred horsepower to deliver to the Minister of Marine a small bluish envelope from the Admiral of the Fleet sent by special messenger. This letter must have contained some very important information or considerations, seeing that the order was to squeeze everything out of the engines and have the letter delivered not later than seven o'clock that evening. And so in the boiler room of the *Stroiny* strong young men with sweating bodies stripped to the waist uninterruptedly fed full shovels of heavy coal into the furnaces, from whose hungry jaws leapt a blazing light that turned the drops of sweat on their shoulders into big rubies. The roaring ventilators, threatening to collapse, forced fresh air into the stokehold, but it all went into the furnaces to fan the flames and drive them between the boiler tubes in which the water turned to steam. The elderly Chief Petty Officer, captain of the stokehold—he, too, was stripped to the waist—kept an anxious eye on the pressure gauges, whose needles quivered at the red line, and gave all his attention to the water pumps which were feeding water into the boilers. In the adjoining engine-room, behind a bulk-head hot as a kitchen range, a young engineer was just as anxiously watching the instruments—this was the first time he was running the engines at this rate, contrary to instructions. They had been under way for over an hour and would have to keep this up for another five hours at least. He was afraid the engines wouldn't stand the strain. But every now and then the impatient voice of the destroyer's captain kept coming down the speaking tube, demanding: "How many revs?", and despite the instructions and rules he had to demand of the stokers full steam pressure, to torture the pistons and cylinders, and overtax the propeller shafts so as to keep the pointers of the tachometers from shifting the least bit to the left. Speed, speed at all costs, Admiral's orders, the driving voice from the bridge, the urgency of war. . . . The former pupil of the Vologda grammar school and now lord of the *Stroiny's* engines

and boilers, sweating profusely in his inferno together with the boiler ratings, despairingly gives a sign to the mechanic at the valves: "Give her the gun", and simultaneously presses the bell button to the stokehold. The half-naked men start shovelling faster, the elderly Chief Petty Officer stares dazedly at the pressure gauge. The donkey pumps work like mad, the boilers roar, shaken by the force of the steam raised within them, the funnels belch lurid smoke—the delicate pointers of the tachometers measuring the shaft revolutions move still further to the right, obeying the captain's command. The *Stroiny* pounds along at an unheard-of speed, almost three knots faster than she showed at trials, and the wind on the bridge whips the signalmen's ribbons, and the navigating officer reports to the captain in a pleased voice that Rodsher was on the beam eight minutes earlier.

But while the Engineer, a second-rate officer of the Russian Imperial Navy, was undergoing torture in the engine-room, the remaining officers of the *Stroiny*, including the commanding officer, a plump and jolly lieutenant, who was old enough to enjoy a higher rank, frankly rejoiced at the destroyer's sudden mission to St. Petersburg. No one, of course, hoped for a "dickey run", it being clear that the destroyer would stand there in immediate readiness for action. But the fact that they wouldn't have to hang around the Grocher lighthouse on night patrol, guarding the entrance to the harbour against no one knew whom, induced a cheerful mood on the bridge, which Yuri was unable to share. He was invited there politely soon after they cast off, but after standing about for a quarter of an hour with a queasy smile he slipped down to the deck and found a place at last here, on the empty after bridge. He preferred to be alone: it seemed to him that everyone knew of his shameful failure and that every officer of the *Stroiny* was glancing mockingly at the luckless follower of Admiral von Schantz.

As a matter of fact, no one knew of his bid-for-glory plans or of his talk with Nikolai on their way to the landing stage.

They had no sooner come out of the house than Yuri, speaking in a casual tone as if it were a matter of small account, told Nikolai about his plan and asked him for a letter of introduction to Lieutenant Ryazanov or any other officer of his acquaintance commanding a destroyer, no matter where—at Abo or here, in Helsingfors. His brother being in one of his ironical moods, Yuri was careful to avoid mentioning such things as duty or the impossibility of sitting it out ashore when there was a war on at sea. Instead, he attempted to clothe his romantic idea in a prosy practical guise, pretending

that it was merely a question of the five or six weeks pending resumption of college, during which he had nowhere to spend his leave, seeing that he could not come to the *Generalissimo* as usual.

All his shifts and devices, however, were in vain.

"So you, too, are hankering after heroic deeds, young man?" Nikolai said sarcastically. "Let me warn you—it's old-fashioned and *passé*."

Yuri reddened. He was straddled at the first salvo. Flustered though he was, he nevertheless plunged on.

"Not necessarily," he mumbled. "I simply thought it would be useful to gain some experience before promotion."

"What sort of experience?" Nikolai said maliciously. "In what capacity, may I ask?"

Yuri shrugged his shoulders, his heart sinking within him: that accursed question was so familiar to him.

"Oh, I don't know—signalman, gunner. . . ."

The lieutenant laughed.

"Don't be offended, but if I were Ryazanov or any other commanding officer of a destroyer I wouldn't let you come within a mile of a ship's gun. A gunner, my dear chap, is an artist at his job and he doesn't start shooting until his third year of service. Until then he just takes pot shots, to the chagrin of his gunnery officer. Nor, I should imagine, is any signalman worthy of his salt made in two or three weeks. I wouldn't take you on in my ship as an officer's servant—I bet you can't clean a suit properly, or warm a plate, or make a cup of coffee. Besides, it's none of your business. You're no sailor, and as an officer you're being licked into shape for over three years now. So stick it out, once it's your destiny. Your time will come. Even if I did get soft enough to pen a letter of introduction, do you think Ryazanov or Petrov-the-Fifth would cry out with delight: 'By all means, Yuri Petrovich, what would you like—a gun, the helm?' Not on your life. Nobody cares to get a bottle for seducing minors. Ryazanov would get it in the neck and you'd spend your whole leave in the cells. As for heroic deeds, you'd never win a sailor's cross even if you did manage to fix up on some destroyer. It's your youth and inexperience that makes you think of war as a chain of gallant deeds. If you believe your brother, take this as gospel."

Seeing Yuri's clouded face, the lieutenant patted him kindly on the shoulder.

"Ah, Yuri, Yuri! Frankly, I understand you. In your place I'd be just as keen to join the fleet. But bear this in mind—we're both

in the same boat. For one it's Kiel, for the other Abo, but life has kicked the bark off both our shins, which is as it should be. Better let's figure out how you can get there from here. Maybe you'll browse at Mundgatan until your train is due?"

"No," Yuri answered sharply, not even giving himself time to ponder the question. The mere thought of meeting Irina was distasteful to him. The next minute he thought of Sasha and regretted his answer—who knows, maybe he was losing a wonderful and unexpected chance of happiness. "Come, let me kiss you at parting. . . ."—her soft, strange, thrilling voice rang in his ears, and Sasha rose before him, a seductive vision promising solace against the ills of that disastrous day.

"Just as you like. Have you got any money?"

"Plenty," Yuri said in English. He was simply ashamed to mention the idiotic purchase of the suitcase at such a moment.

"Good. I'm a bit out of pocket just now. Irina's been here for over a week. Gudkov, by the way, reckoned up what allowances were due to us on account of the war—for binoculars, raincoats, and just money for nothing. I'll send you some when I get rich. Meanwhile, take this—it's the best I can do." He handed Yuri a Russian ten-ruble note. "Sorry, it's the best I can do."

Yuri walked at his side as if in a dream. He couldn't believe that his plan had been so completely, quickly and simply upset. And then dogged thought suggested a decision: he would go to Abo in any case and get his way without having Nikolai pull wires for him. And until then he would go back to Mundgatan. "Come, let me kiss you. . . ." His mind made up, he felt more cheerful.

But when they reached the landing stage everything changed again in an instant. The picket-boat from the *Generalissimo* was waiting, but a motor launch from the *Rurik* came alongside the quay and Lieutenant Boshnakov jumped out of it accompanied by a tow-haired skinny sub-lieutenant. He greeted Yuri as he would a good acquaintance. Nikolai followed him to the Staff car standing at the landing-stage, where he exchanged a few words with him, then came back to Yuri.

"You're in luck," he said, smiling. "The *Stroiny* is going straight to St. Petersburg from Sandvik Harbour. Boshnakov has agreed to take you along and fix you up during the trip. What will you do here? I'm afraid you'll run off to Abo, I know you, and I'll have to answer for you to the College authorities and to our noble dying race. Now, now, keep your hair on! Drop me a line once in a while. I'll write to you, too, when I get the chance."

He embraced Yuri, kissed him on both cheeks, and lifted him off the ground in the old familiar way.

"There are various kinds of brotherhood," he said quietly and gravely—"that of the blood, the spirit and the sword. You and I are lucky—we have all of these, and another on top of them—that of geography: Abo—Kiel. Let that be our password in life: Abo—Kiel! Some time we'll get to both places. And now, run along!"

He stepped quickly towards the picket-boat, and Yuri, fighting back his tears, ran into the guard house and snatched up his pea jacket and suitcase. The picket-boat had shoved off. Nikolai stood in the stern cabin, tall, handsome, in immaculate white tunic—the only dear person in the world left to him—and slowly waved his hand. Yuri tore his cap off and waved it, then ran towards the motorcar.

All that followed was wrapped in a sad faint mist. His acquaintance with the sub-lieutenant, who was bearing a letter to St. Petersburg from the Admiral, their arrival aboard the *Stroiny*, his taking leave of Boshnakov, muttering polite words of gratitude, the bell for "Clear Lower Deck", the ship steaming out of harbour, the distant silhouette of the *Generalissimo* against the receding grey-blue backcloth of the roadstead, the speeding *Okhotnik* flying the flag of the Admiral of the Fleet crossing their bows, the ceremonial pipe and the line of officers and men tending the side with Yuri given a place between the two, the heeling destroyer swivelling round aport at Grocher, and then this mad furious race that shook the whole ship—all this took place in a timeless void. And only now, standing on the after bridge of the *Stroiny*, was he able to collect some of his scattered wits and sort things out for himself after the surprising and confusing events of the last three or four hours of that Thursday, the seventeenth day of July A. D. nineteen hundred and fourteen and the eighteenth year of his own birth.

He gazed at the misty churning at the ship's stern, his mind a tangled maze of thoughts and impressions—Kiel and Abo, Mundgatan and Drumsö, the green semi-gloom of the bathroom and Wagner with his anguished yearnings, the pent-up bitterness of Nikolai's failures and his odd thoughts about Russia's future—thoughts which he had apparently been nurturing for some time—this war hanging over their heads, the operatic plot of Nikolai's "august friend", the Livitins' wretched impecuniosity and insufficiently high birth, unfitting for the society of the Greves and Heidens—those Russian nobles of foreign blood—this mad, blind, obdurate love of a woman who had turned the heads of all and

everyone, Nikolai's desperate bid to turn the tide of war by a sudden act of military knight-errantry, Yuri's own hunger for battle and glory, the Admiral with eyes blotted out by rage, the collapsed rose petals, Sasha with the hot moist ring of her slow kiss, the ridiculous spectacle in the shop, Nikolai's hands clutching his head, this harrowing anxiety and fear of the future, which yawned at his feet like a gaping abyss, a colourless void full of the unknown, with the squirming lampreys at the bottom, lying in wait for the drowned, and the Izvekovs' stuffy flat to which he would be returning soon. All this whirled in his brain, a hopeless weary tangle, without beginning and without end, and he gazed dully into the distance where the angry swirls of the ship's wake gradually surrendered to the sway of the placid brooding sea.

This difficult day too, no doubt, would fade away in the same manner, becalmed under life's smoothing blanket. It was with a new adult nostalgia that he recalled his first visit in May to the *Generalissimo*, the quiet conversation in the cabin, the smooth peaceful routine of ship life, and the feeling of confidence in the future. And then the *Bditelny* rose before him, with the sentry's bayonet over the mess deck hatch, and those sea chests and ditty-boxes in the boat (the "condemned men's effects"), and the plaintive wail of the last post wafted up from the *Generalissimo*. Things were happening in the world of which he knew nothing, strange currents were stirring somewhere beneath the surface, and his youth was apparently beginning to lose its carefree sunny quality. He had to get certain things straight in his own mind—Nikolai's failures and amatory hallucinations, and his own place in this incredibly complicated pattern of life. It was far more complicated than he imagined it to be.

Only once in the course of these painful reflections did he smile—at the recollection of the casket and the railway carriage. He found himself thinking of that swaggering midshipman as of a stranger, showing off in front of the Pavlons and giving himself airs in front of the student, a naive boy for whom the war was a theatrical spectacle, and he felt acutely ashamed of himself. In one brief morning he had grown suddenly into adulthood, like a bud that suddenly bursts into leaf. And painful though these thoughts were, they no longer brought tears to his eyes. Boyhood was now gone.

On the after bridge of the destroyer *Stroiny* there stood a young man who was beginning to understand what life meant. With a roar of screws and hum of belching smoke the destroyer was rushing

him away from the realm of carefree youthful dreams into the hard world of grim realities. Like the Gulf of Finland, which gradually narrowed into the Neva Inlet and then the Neva River, the future of this young man narrowed into focus as it entered the banks of reality.

Presently, no sign of the ship's spumous track remained upon the smooth silver-blue surface, and the ancient waters of the Gulf of Finland lay placid and unwrinkled beneath a deep cloudless sky, impassive and insensible to people and their ills, to the destinies of governments and individuals.

Once upon a time, maybe centuries of years ago, a stout-built sailing boat with a simple cargo of goods for the neighbour-Karelians set sail from Lake Ilmen down the Volkhov. Her white sail, embroidered with coloured threads—the patient work of the women-folk in the long dragging days of their lonely vigil—filled with wind, and it ran, did that sailboat, along the familiar trail blazed by the dare-devil freebooters of yore. What made that helmsman take it into his head no one knows, but after taking his boat out into Lake Nevo, he coasted, not towards sunrise, as everyone did, but towards sundown, and after a while, far longer than it takes to tell, he came to a river, or maybe it was a channel, a wide, swift, brimming stream. And it led out, did that stream, into an unfamiliar broad, but the water in that broad was kind of familiar—sweet to the taste, none too deep on sounding, no rougher in the wave than that which rode Lake Nevo, and as fish-rich as their own native Ilmen. They sailed along a bit farther until they came upon new people by the name of Yems, who resembled Karelians, being just as tow-headed, short of stature, and seemingly hardworking. The men of Ilmen bartered their goods without loss and turned back into the broad river-channel, homeward-bound for Ilmen Lake.

And it never occurred to them that they had discovered there a way straight to the ocean. In the fullness of time, however, there was born upon the banks of the Volkhov a *bylina* about Sadko the Seafarer. For the first time the good folks of Novgorod dreamt of the sea, of the briny deep, which led to strange and distant lands. And so others followed the trail which those men of Ilmen had blazed, and every year saw them journeying farther and farther afield until some other helmsman, whose name, too, remains unknown, steered his lake craft out into green water with the strong tang of the sea in it and reached the Swedish island of Gotland.

The miracle had happened. The woodland, ploughland, earthbound folk who had never seen the sea even in their dreams, had crossed the boundless watery plain.

And one after another, thereafter, the men of Ilmen hied them to the merchants of the Hanse, to the rich land of Denmark, to the Island of Gotland and even to Sweden itself, while the vessels of Swedish, Danish and German guests sailed in turn up the Neva, Ladoga and Volkhov to the distant city that now bore the name of Great Sovereign Novgorod. The long and narrow Gulf of Finland, which Nature herself had cut deep into the mainland and which was connected moreover with Lake Ladoga by the broad Neva, became a natural outlet from the impassable marshy forests which was so essential to the nascent Russian state and by which flax and hemp, wax and furs, fat and honey were shipped to foreign buyers.

But where there is money, there is blood. In the year 1134 Novgorod merchants landing in Copenhagen were killed, in 1157 the Danes seized Russian vessels and their cargoes in Slesvig, and in 1164 fifty-five Swedish men-of-war paid a surprise visit to the mouth of the Volkhov and laid siege to the town of Ladoga to keep the Novgorodians securely locked away from the Baltic. On the fifth day, however, the Swedes were obliged to depart, leaving no less than forty-three of their fighting ships at the bottom of the lake and the river Voronaya. Twenty years later, together with the Karelians, the Novgorodians replied by sending their first naval force across the Baltic and burning the Swedish capital of Sigtuna.

Like a smouldering fire, now bursting into flame, now subsiding, the age-old struggle for the shores of the Gulf of Finland went on. Two hundred years later the first Russo-Swedish peace treaty was at last signed at the Oreshek Fortress, just built at the entrance to Lake Ladoga by the Grand Duke Yuri of Muscovy. Sweden undertook to put no obstacles in the way of Russia's trade in the Baltic. But a quarter of a century had barely passed when everything started over again: the troops of King Magnus seized Oreshek and renamed it Nöteborg.

For nearly another five centuries the Gulf of Finland saw waves of troops rolling back and forth along its shores—those of Sweden, Denmark, the Livonian Order, Lithuania and Rzecz Pospolita on one side, and the growing military forces of Novgorod and Moscow, Pskov and Vladimir, the Russian Kingdom and Russian Empire, on the other. The troops of Ivan the Fourth marched upon Koporye, Ivangorod, Kolivan, Yuriev, Rakover and the ancient Russian settlements on the southern shore to which the Livonian knights had

given their own names. The galleys, snows, brigantines, frigates, and men-of-war of Russia's first navy-lover, the recklessly brave, headstrong Peter Alexeyevich, sailed along the northern shore against Nöteborg, Vyborg, Helsingfors, Hangö Udde, and Abo. War after war raged in the plains and marshes of the lands of the Esths and Lifflandians from Lake Chudskoye to the Gulf of Riga, on the cliffs, lakes and skerries of the land of the Karelians, the Yems and the Sums, from Ladoga to Bothnia, staining the waters and stones with the militia's, streltsi's, soldiers', sailors', officers' and admirals' blood of the Russians fighting their way to the sea—twelve cruel wars each lasting from three to twenty-five years.

And now the thirteenth was starting.

Dangerously, furiously, at the risk of an engine breakdown, the destroyer raced westward, driven on by an impatient Admiral. Taciturn and gloomy, he stood on the port wing of the shuddering bridge, gripping the rail as though he would propel the ship forward still faster. Glancing now and again in his direction, the *Okhotnik's* C.O., a dapper but stern-looking Senior Lieutenant who was about to be promoted to the rank of Captain (after which he could expect to be appointed commanding officer of one of the new destroyers of the *Novik* type then undergoing construction), pulled the plug out of the engine-room voice tube, and pressing his lips to the brass mouth-piece, which reeked of zealously applied ship's polish, asked quietly: "How many revs?" Then, putting his ear to the tube, he worked his lips and said, displeased: "Raise all the steam you can!" And the sweating naked men in the stokehold flung shovelfuls of coal into the fiery jaws of the furnaces, and the Engineer winced as if with a toothache, but the pointers of the tachometers moved slightly to the right.

As it was, the *Okhotnik* was going at the top of her permissible speed. Another two or three such crazy runs with the Admiral and her machinery would have to be overhauled. What made him take such a fancy to these two destroyers—the *Pogranichnik* and *Okhotnik*? They had no decent accommodation, no comforts, nor speed, yet he always transferred his flag to one of these and drove her like mad, pushing the rail with gripping hands. It did give something though—both he and the commanding officer of the *Pogranichnik* were assured of a career. Their friends could laugh at what they called the "Admiral's cabbies", but who cared.

"How many revs?" the Captain asked again, and commanded in a deliberately loud voice: "More speed! What? I don't know, you're the Engineer, not I. It's speed I want, not your explanations."

It was with satisfaction that he saw the Admiral take his hands off the rail and thrust them into the pockets of his short coat. It was a sign that for the time being no "bottle" was forthcoming.

The Admiral was really in a hurry to get to Porkkala so as to be able to return to Helsingfors before nightfall and board the armoured cruiser *Rurik*, which had direct telegraphic contact with St. Petersburg. All the ships designed to take part in laying the central mine barrage had been concentrated at the Porkkala harbour three days ago on his orders, and it was important for him to personally check their readiness for this operation, on which the fate of the war depended.

The fate of the war?

If anyone were to ask him, experienced Naval Commander, pupil of Admiral Makarov and passionate champion of his ideas, commanding officer of Port Arthur's battleship *Sevastopol*, awarded a gold sword and the St. George's Cross, an Admiral who had been commanding the Baltic Fleet for over six years and succeeded during this time in raising the fleet's fire, mine and torpedo power to an immeasurable degree, a chief prickly in his relations with the Admiralty and the Ministry, and straightforward in his dealings with his officers—if anyone were to put this question to him he could answer in all conscience that the fate of the war depended on other things. It depended on swift offensive action, on audacity of design, on Petrine, almost reckless, bravery—qualities that were once a tradition with Russian naval commanders: with Peter himself at the Battle of Hangö Udde, with Admiral Spiridov at Cesma, with Rear-Admiral Ushakov at Kerch Strait, with Vice-Admiral Makarov, who for the first time in naval history launched torpedo attacks from boats off the steamer *Konstantin*.

But no one at the Admiralty or the Ministry cared to support the offensive spirit, which died together with Makarov on the *Petro-pavlovsk*. All seemed to be hypnotised by the preconceived notion that the German Fleet's very first act would be to make a breakthrough to the Gulf of Finland with the aim of bombarding the capital and causing confusion at the very outset of the war, although the German naval command, of course, had long been aware that the narrow part of the Gulf of Finland at Revel would be blocked up with countless mines and that this barrier could only be forced at the cost of great sacrifice and effort. But the idea that the capital would necessarily have to be defended from the sea gained such a hold upon the minds of staff and government circles that it dominated the strategic and operational designs for the conduct of the Baltic

Fleet during the coming war. It perverted the thinking of the naval academics. It determined the blind and narrow path of the Admiralty. Worse still, the fighting admiral in command of the Baltic's naval forces fell under its deadly spell, which paralysed the Petrine ability for swift action and freedom of naval thought characteristic of the activities of Russia's sea captains. This Admiral, who, following in Nakhimov's footsteps, dreamt of wresting the initiative from the enemy and imposing his own upon them, succumbed to the baleful effects of the cold reasoning current in the highest circles as to the possibility or impossibility of naval action against the enemy, the sense or senselessness of proposals for which no provision was made in the theory of naval art.

As often happens with intelligent men of principle, he forgot, under the pressure of those around him, his own ideas concerning the defence of the Gulfs of Finland and Riga by offensive methods, forgot his own daring plans for planting mines in the southern part of the Baltic Sea, for shelling the German seacoast, for actively seeking out and bringing the enemy to action, if only in small but sudden and disconcerting battles. His chief care now was not to be late in laying his minefield, and he applied all the resources of his mind in inventing some new form of resistance to the enemy and making timely use of this safest of methods designed to guard himself against the enemy's attack.

This thought had occupied his mind ever since Vice-Admiral Rusin, Chief of Naval Staff, had arrived on the *Pogranichnik* in the afternoon of July 11, after the reception of the French President, and proposed that they both go and see Admiral and Adjutant General Grigorovich, the Minister of Marine, to discuss the situation with him. It became clear to the Admiral at this conference that war with Germany was unavoidable, and there and then he asked the Minister to allow him to start laying the central mine-barrage as and when the situation demanded. The Minister promised to report this to the Tsar, as this matter lay with him. In the evening the Admiral left for Revel in the *Pogranichnik* where all the commanding officers of the fleet had been summoned to meet him the next morning.

REPORT OF THE NAVAL CHIEF OF STAFF DATED JULY 14, 1914

YOUR IMPERIAL MAJESTY has been pleased to approve the plan of operations of the Baltic Fleet in the event of a European war; according to this plan the most important oper-

ation is the planting of a major mine-barrage in the central Revel-Porkkala position by a force of mine-layers.

The question of determining the moment for carrying out this operation was discussed at a special meeting of the Council of Ministers presided over by YOUR IMPERIAL MAJESTY. On the 12th of July YOUR IMPERIAL MAJESTY was pleased to ordain that the laying of the central mine-barrage be carried out upon special command. However, a situation may arise under present political circumstances in the Baltic theatre when the sudden appearance of the enemy at the entrance to the Gulf of Finland may be expected; in this event it is essential for the success of the Fleet's operation that the minefield be laid immediately, as there will be no time to obtain the special Command for such an operation.

In submitting these views for YOUR IMPERIAL MAJESTY's gracious consideration, I beg to solicit YOUR IMPERIAL MAJESTY's Command to the Commander-in-Chief of the Baltic Fleet to have the central mine-barrage laid without waiting for such Special Command, in the event of an obviously dangerous situation arising that will require it.

R u s i n

Admiral Essen
Rurik, Helsingfors
14th July 18.26

His Majesty has refused to grant permission for the central mine-barrage to be laid at the discretion of the Naval Commander-in-Chief in the event of a dangerous situation arising and without waiting for Special Command.

G r i g o r o v i c h

But into this, now absolute, surrender to the official naval doctrine of the C.M.P.—Central Mining Position—there had suddenly broken a gleam of common sense. And the Admiral regretted that it had entered the head of a rank-and-file lieutenant off the battleship *Generalissimo* and not his own head, that of the Admiral of the Baltic Fleet, who, within a few hours, when mobilisation was announced, would, under the Articles of War, become Commander-in-Chief of the fleet, a fleet of daring operations, of Petrine audacity. One such act, undoubtedly, was the scheme set forth in a letter from

a naval officer by the name of Lieutenant Livitin, which he had found in his private mail folder in the morning of July 16th, and which he had promptly tried to give effect to.

Essen—Rusin
Morning, July 16
(by flag lieutenant messenger)

...2) The idea has arisen of mining the channel leading out of Kiel bay at an appropriate moment. A steamer (Norwegian, Danish or English) could be sent in advance provided with false documents and equipped as a mine-layer, which, upon receipt of a prearranged radiogram, could mine the exit from Kiel bay (or rather seaward of the exit) and then scuttle the ship, in German waters of course. If war is unavoidable we shall gain a tremendous advantage by making the first strike at the centre of the enemy's positions. I believe we should strike the iron while it's hot. We have volunteers for this....

Admiral Essen
Rurik, Helsingfors
16th July 10.10

The Minister has ordered all training detachments to be disbanded. Mobilisation of the fleet and four commands will probably be announced today.

R u s i n

Minister of Marine
St. Petersburg
16th July 12.10

Permit me in view of impending dangerous situation to lay the central mine-barrage.

E s s e n

Admiral Essen
Rurik, Helsingfors
17th July 2.05

His Majesty has again confirmed that the central mine-barrage is to be laid by Special Command.

G r i g o r o v i c h

Mobilisation was announced, war was unavoidable, and the Admiral, without waiting for the Admiralty's reply, decided to carry out the plan proposed by the *Generalissimo's* lieutenant. Information had been received about foreign ships detained in port, and the lieutenant had been sent for; he was to arrive aboard the *Rurik* at colours. When he came into the cabin the Admiral told him of certain corrections of his own to the plan. The daring operation appealed to the Admiral and he was for tackling it in real earnest. But at this point his flag lieutenant came in and placed a leather folder on his table, a folder he hated the sight of, because it usually contained telegrams and letters from the Admiralty. Opening it with a gesture of annoyance, he read:

Admiral of the Fleet
Rurik, Helsingfors
17th July 8.18

His Majesty wishes it to be borne in mind that since we are not at war with Germany it is necessary to be careful in order to avoid misunderstandings and complications.

R u s i n

The blood rushed to his head and he barely controlled himself. He dismissed the lieutenant and paced up and down his cabin for a long time with his hands behind his back, until the Chief-of-Staff came in to report. The dream—energetic and daring as a conception of Makarov's—faded in the harsh light of sober reality. The old preconceived notion of the German Fleet appearing in the Gulf of Finland took possession of him once more. The tension grew.

Admiral of the Fleet
Rurik, Helsingfors
17th July 11.18

According to information received, Germany announced general mobilisation at 3 a.m.

R u s i n

Minister of Marine
St. Petersburg
17th July 11.30

Consider it necessary to lay mine-barrage immediately afraid
may be late am leaving for Porkkala in the *Okhotnik*.

E s s e n

Admiral of the Fleet
Rurik, Helsingfors
17th July 15.00

According secret service reports part of German Fleet moving
to Danzig from Kiel.

R u s i n

Naval Forces
17th July 15.15

Detain all vessels commercial docks, close all traffic Gulf of
Finland until further orders. Lay mine-barrage.

Admiral of the Fleet
(Radiogram not dispatched)

Minister of Marine
St. Petersburg
17th July 18.00

Forwarded you noon today by destroyer suggestions for report
to His Majesty. Failing receipt your answer tonight shall lay
mine-barrage in the morning.

E s s e n

His Majesty the Tsar
Peterhoff
17th July 21.00

Sire the situation is extremely grave immediate laying mine-
barrage essential delay may make struggle with German Fleet
impossible I beg your gracious. . . .

(unfinished)

Admiral of the Fleet
Rurik, Helsingfors
18th July 2.20

According secret service reports German Fleet may be expected at positions by 16.00. Minister of Marine reporting to His Majesty.

R u s i n

For over an hour, like a wound-up mechanism, the Admiral paced the deck of the armoured cruiser *Rurik* between the after turret and the sentry at the flagstaff. Day was dawning bright and calm. Stillness reigned over the sleeping ship and the harbour, whose waters were colouring. The petty officers' pipes had sounded, and the watch was being relieved. The Admiral paced up and down with his hands behind his back, trying to control his hasty steps.

At one of his turns at the turret he was overtaken by Lieutenant Boshnakov, who, eyes red from lack of sleep, had lost his customary dapper appearance.

"Your Excellency," he began, but seeing a telegram in his hand, the Admiral snatched it from him.

Admiral Essen, *Rurik*

Helsingfors

(Received 4.15)

Express Telegram Number Two

Adjutant-General G r i g o r o v i c h

Admiral of the Fleet, Cruiser *Rurik*, Helsingfors

(received 4.18)

We give permission lay central mine-barrage.

Commander-in-Chief Lieutenant Admiral-General

N i c h o l a s

The Admiral took his cap off and crossed himself with a sweeping gesture.

At 6.56 the first of the thirty-nine thousand and thirty-two mines to be laid in the Gulf of Finland and the Baltic Sea by the ships of the Russian Imperial Navy clattered along its track, pushed on

by sailors, and rolled into the water from the starboard half-ports of the mine-layer *Narov*, once the steam-and-sail frigate *General-Admiral*. And like a tiny pebble that sends a gigantic avalanche hurtling into the abyss, it drew with it into the abyss of history the centuries-old political system of the vast state called the Russian Empire.

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